**The Suffering Servant is blessed with fruitful life**

Text: Isaiah 53:10

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**Scriptures:** 1 Corinthians 15:1-23; Isaiah 52:13-53:12

**Songs Chosen:** See what a morning, [SttL] 32, 313, 309, 180

**Series:** Occasional (Easter Sunday)

**Theme:** In the last of the four ‘Servant Songs’ the prophet Isaiah predicts not only the suffering of the Servant under the curse of God’s judgement and also the resulting blessing of fruitful life; being able to see His offspring, having His days prolonged forever and successfully glorifying His Heavenly Father in everything.

**Proposition:**  By faith, the blessings of Christ’s resurrection – being alive to see His family, alive forever and alive to glorify God - belong also to all who are joined to Him.

**Introduction**

We have all had surprises. They can be wonderful, like a birthday celebration organised for you in secret and then suddenly revealed, or they can be very difficult, like the diagnosis of an unanticipated disease which your doctor informs you about in a consultation. A surprise is an unexpected event; like this unforeseen period of nationwide ‘house arrest’ as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The resurrection of Christ from death took his disciples by surprise. They were not expecting the Lord Jesus to be alive. They knew that He had died and been buried in a sealed tomb. On that first ‘resurrection Sunday’ morning they were not gathered together outside the tomb in ready hopeful expectation that Jesus would appear to them. Instead they were huddled in a room with locked doors, fearing the Jews who had conspired to have Jesus put to death (John 20:19).

However, not only had Christ Himself spoken to the disciples of His own upcoming death and resurrection many times (e.g. Luke 9:22), but the Old Testament Scriptures also point forward to His new life after the grave. In God’s unfolding plan of salvation, the resurrection of Christ was not a surprise. This extraordinary event was expected. That’s what the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried,* ***that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures***” (1 Cor 15:3-4)

During our Good Friday remembrance service, we looked at some of the many Old Testament Scriptures which predict the coming Christ who would die for the sins of many.

**What Old Testament Scriptures can you think of which point forward to the resurrection of Christ from the dead?**

Many people find it hard to come up with many, if any, such Scriptures, and yet Paul writes that Christ: *“was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures”.* On the road to Emmaus, the risen Lord Jesus opened the minds of Cleopas and his companion to understand the Scriptures and said to them “*Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead*” (Luke 24:46).

This morning we’ll look at a few of the Old Testament Scriptures that our Lord was likely referring to when He opened the minds of those two disciples on the Emmaus road so that they could understand that God’s Word had predicted His resurrection from the dead, three days after he died. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah is familiar to most of us. It is widely quoted or referred to in the New Testament in connection with the suffering and death of our Lord. We could say it’s very much a ‘Good Friday’ text.

What may be a surprise to some of us is that Isaiah 53 is also a ‘Resurrection Sunday’ text. This morning we are going to draw on a few different Old Testament passages, but our primary focus will be on Isaiah 53:10b where the prophet writes of the Suffering Servant: “*he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand*”. We’ll see how these words wonderfully apply to the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, under three headings:

1. Alive to see His family
2. Alive to live forever
3. Alive to glorify God
4. **Alive to see His family**

One of the hardest parts of the current Alert Level 4 lockdown for many people is not being able to be with family members who are living outside of their ‘bubble’. For some of us in our congregation we have adult children who we have not seen in person for over two weeks.

The Word of God presents children as a blessing. For example: “*Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate*” (Psalm 127:3-5). “*The LORD bless you from Zion!... May you see your children's children!*” (Psalm 128:5,6) “*Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers*” (Prov 17:6).

The Suffering Servant who is a significant figure in the prophesies of Isaiah, being the focus of the four ‘Servant Songs’ (42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9 and 52.13-53.12). In the 4th Servant Song, which we heard earlier, the Word of God reveals that the promised Messiah, the anointed One, the Christ, will come under the curse of judgement.

1. He will be despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (v3)
2. Smitten by God and afflicted (v4)
3. Wounded for the transgressions of others, crushed for their iniquities (v5)
4. Taken away by oppression and judgement (v8)
5. His grave was with the wicked (9)

These curses fill the middle 3 sections of this 4th ‘servant song’ in Isaiah, but the first and last sections prophesy great blessing. This Servant will act with wisdom and be high and lifted up; exalted (52:13). He will also ‘*see his offspring*’ (53:10). The blessing of being able to see His offspring will come to the One who had been cursed by great suffering, death and burial. Biblical scholars debate whether Isaiah was consciously writing here about the resurrection of Christ. We can’t be sure; however, we do know that these words are fulfilled in Christ who suffered, died, was buried and on the third day arose from the dead: He has been blessed by God the Father. He is high and lifted up. He has been exalted to be Lord of Lords and King of Kings, seated at God’s right hand.

But, you may ask, how has Christ received the blessing of ‘*seeing his offspring*’ when He died without fathering any children? It helps to know that the Hebrew word translated ‘offspring’ here is the word ‘seed’. It is also important to understand that the meaning here is not physical but spiritual. Before His death, Jesus said to his disciples: “*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit*” (John 12:24).

Following the curse of death on the Suffering Servant, He now receives the blessing of being able to see His offspring; the living fruit which has resulted from His ‘falling into the earth’ when He died and was buried. The resurrection of Christ means that He is now able to see the large family which has resulted from the effective, but excruciatingly painful ‘*will of the Lord to crush him...to put him to grief*’ (Isaiah 53:10a). The family of the Risen Lord Jesus are the true spiritual descendants of believing Abraham, as Paul explains in Galatians: “*If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise*” (3:29).

As we’ve noted, one of the hard things about this Alert Level 4 lockdown is not being able to see some of our family members in person. It has been so much more difficult for many families around the world when they have lost someone they love who has died alone and isolated from their family. Not seeing the family we love is a great sadness. How painful for Mary to see her son Jesus dying on the cross. Remember how Christ fulfilled the 5th commandment by ensuring that she was cared for by John (John 19:26).

But now, the Suffering Servant who had been cut off from the land of the living (Isa 53:8) would see all his ‘seed’; all the spiritual descendants of Abraham, all those whose faith is credited to them as righteousness (Gen 15:6). Brothers and sisters, family in Christ, this includes us! Jesus is alive, risen from the dead, to see us! To see us now as we grow in Him, as we abide in Him, as we live in Him. To see us in the future in the New Heavens and New Earth, together with the whole family of God.

The blessing which comes to Christ of being able to see His family is our blessing too! We look forward to seeing Him face-to-face in the coming Paradise (1 Cor 13:12). We look forward to seeing those we have known in the Lord who have already gone to glory. They too are alive in Christ and can look forward together with us with great joy to seeing our Saviour’s whole family together in the New Heavens and New Earth. An enormous family ‘bubble’ with siblings from ‘*every tribe and language and people and nation*’ (Rev 5:9).

This is a realm where there will be no death, which brings us to our 2nd point:

1. **Alive to live forever**

It is always sad when a person dies, but especially when someone dies young, having not been able to live as long as many do. The Word of God presents a long life as a great blessing. For example: “*O LORD, in your strength the king rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exults! He asked life of you; you gave it to him, length of days forever and ever*” (Psalm 21:1,4). “*My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you*” (Prov 3:1-2). Think of Isaac, spared from being sacrificed by his father by the Lord’s gracious intervention in the land of Moriah. He was blessed with 180 years of life on this earth. He ‘*died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days*’ (Gen 35:29).

The promise in Isaiah 53 is that whilst it was the will of the Lord God to put the Suffering Servant ‘to grief’ when He became ‘an offering for guilt’, yet God would then ‘*prolong his days*’. God has the power to extend life, as He did when King Hezekiah became sick, but the Lord enabled him to recover (2 Kings 20:1-6). The prophesy in Isaiah 53 does not indicate **how long** God would prolong the days of the promised Messiah; however we do see how much his days will be extended from other Old Testament Scriptures. God promised to King David through the prophet Nathan that a greater king would come from his royal line and that God would establish this Ruler’s kingdom **forever** (2 Samuel 7:12-13). God has prolonged the days of His Son Jesus, the promised Davidic King so that He will reign forever as the eternal King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

King David wrote Psalm 16 which expressed his confidence that the Lord would deliver him from the threat of death: “*For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption*” (Ps 16:10). These words have a greater fulfilment in the resurrection of Christ as both the Apostles Peter and Paul revealed. On the day of Pentecost Peter declared to the men of Israel: “*this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it*” (Acts 2:23-24). Peter then quoted verse 10 of Psalm 16. At Antioch in Pisidia, Paul explained the fulfilment of God’s promise saying: “*this he has fulfilled…by raising Jesus”* (Acts 13:33). Paul then quoted Psalm 16:10.

If God will not allow the promised Messiah, His Holy One, see corruption, then His days must be prolonged so much that He will never experience the decay of death. The word translated ‘corruption’ in Psalm 16:10 is literally ‘the pit’, referring to the grave. It is the same word used in Jonah 2.6 when the prophet prayed to the Lord from the belly of the fish saying: “*I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever; yet you brought up my life from the* ***pit****, O LORD my God*”.

Jesus refers to Jonah when He speaks of the ‘*sign of the prophet Jonah*’ (Matt 12:39). Jesus predicts His coming burial and implies His resurrection when He says to the scribes and Pharisees: “*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*”(Matt 12:40) .

In the book of Daniel there is a clear prophesy of the bodily resurrection of some people to everlasting life (Daniel 12:2). This Old Testament book reveals that what is true of the Son of Man (Dan 7:13) is true of the saints of the Most High who will receive and possess the kingdom forever (Dan 7:18).

After three days in the grave, God has ‘*prolonged the days*’ of Jesus, the Son of Man, forever. The Old Testament Scriptures point to this truth, which is confirmed by the Word of the Risen Christ who said: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.* ***And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age***." (Matt 28:18-20).

At the end of this age, having come in glory to judge the living and the dead, Christ will enter into the New Heavens and New Earth, a realm where ‘*death shall be no more*’ (Rev 21:4). Jesus Christ is alive to live forever. Brothers and sisters ‘offspring of Christ’, we also are alive in Him to live forever in the New Earth with the Risen Christ our Lord! There is no better future. Friend, if you have not yet come to Jesus in repentance and faith then you desperately need this better future. Without Christ you are truly lost; so come to Him whilst you still have breath.

Brothers and sisters, the very best future we have in our Lord is why we do not need to fear anything about our present circumstances. Jesus is alive to live forever, and we are utterly safe in Him. The Bible assures us with these words from Romans 8:34-36,38-39: “*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died- more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord*”.

Jesus is Alive to see His family, Alive to live forever and Alive to glorify God.

1. **Alive to glorify God**

How do you measure your own success in life? Success is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. It is possible to be ‘successful’ at reaching the wrong primary goal and thereby not to be successful at all, but to utterly fail. Jesus pointed this truth out to his disciples after He had told them of His coming death and resurrection, by asking them the question: “*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?*” (Mark 8:36).

In Isaiah 53:10 we read that, for the blessed Suffering Servant, “*the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand*”. The word ‘prosper’ here means to succeed, to accomplish satisfactorily what is intended; in contrast to failure. True success is accomplishing the Lord’s will. True success is therefore obeying the good commandments of God. The wisdom of the Proverbs reveals this: “*My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you*” (Prov 3:1-2).

The Scriptures present fulfilling the Lord’s will as being a great blessing. “*Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have* ***good success*** *wherever you go*” (Joshua 1:7).

“*And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will* ***succeed***." (2 Chron 20:20).

“*He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he* ***prospers***” (Psalm 1:3)

In this 4th Servant Song, Isaiah prophesies that the will of God succeeds in the hand of the Suffering Servant. This exalted ‘man of sorrows’ will be successful in doing the will of the Lord. We see this success in the active obedience of Christ who said: "*My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work*” (John 4:34). Christ did, and continues to do, the will of His Heavenly Father. In this way He glorifies God. In the ‘high priestly prayer’ recorded in John 17, He says: “*I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed*” (John 17:4-5).

John in The Book of Revelation describes seeing ‘*a Lamb standing as though it had been slain*’ (Rev 5:6). ‘As though’ is used here because the Lamb is alive! He is the worthy Servant who has succeeded in doing the will of the Lord. Having glorified His Heavenly Father, He is now glorified Himself: And they sang a new song, saying, "*Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth*." (Rev 5:9-10).

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, those who ‘succeed’ in following the revealed will of God bring great glory to Him. This is what Jesus has done. This is also what we, who are alive in Christ, are also able to do in His strength. We do not do it perfectly as He does, however, when we fail, we have One who has stood in our place at Calvary and whose righteousness, whose success, is credited to us so that we prosper in Him! Just as the Risen Christ is alive to glorify God, so we too, in Him, are likewise made alive so that we also can succeed in doing that for which we were created: to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

So, we have seen how a number of Old Testament Scriptures do reveal that *the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead*” (Luke 24:46). We’ve looked at Isaiah 53:10 and 52:13 together with 2 Samuel 7:1-12; Psalm 16:10; Jonah 2:6 and Daniel 12:2 today. Now you can all answer the question: ‘What Old Testament Scriptures forward to the resurrection of Christ from the dead?’

This Easter Sunday give thanks to the Lord that Christ the Saviour is alive to see His family, alive to live forever and alive to glorify God. In Him, we too are alive to enjoy these rich blessings, both now and forever.

Amen.