

Sin & the Cross
If Jesus Is Real, Pt. 1
Isaiah 53:1-6

Allan McCullough
Grace Hill Church
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I. INTRODUCTION

a. Now here's the deal, studies show that about 90% of people in our country believe in some sort of God, deity, or higher power.

- Not all of those 90% believe in a specific God or the Christian God, but they believe something is there.

i. Now, I'm assuming that the majority of people here today and watching online believe in what the Bible says about God.

- But I know there are some of you here and watching online who are questioning if there is a god at all, or questioning if we should trust what the Bible says about God, and there are some lingering questions in your mind and your heart that you're wrestling with...

1. Maybe you have some questions and you haven't even admitted it to yourself or to others that you have those questions...

ii. One of the things that we are seeing demographically in our country is a rise in younger generations who grew up in the church that are walking away from the Christian faith...something they are calling deconversion.



- A number of younger people are beginning to deconstruct their faith, give themselves permission to be honest about the questions that they have, and to be more and more comfortable with actually admitting that they don't believe in the God of the Bible.

b. And as I have read and talked to folks who have deconverted and as I have talked to nonbelievers about why they will not consider the God of the Bible...here is what I often hear...

- i. The Christian God...the evangelical God...is a God who demands that we love Him...and if we don't, he will punish us without relent for all of eternity...
 - And so here is what I hear...
 1. *"If I'm honest...this God seems like the most insecure bully in all of the universe."*
 2. *"He demands our love and will use his power against us if we don't give it to him."*
 3. *"And I don't want to devote my entire life to trying to please this insecure bully and fearing that I'm not doing it right and I'm always under the threat of his punishment."*



- ii. Now, some of you are thinking...I resonate with that and I secretly struggle with always feeling like God is mad at me and is punishing me...and some of you are thinking that that is a completely unfair characterization of the God of the Bible.

- But, look at these statistics...

c. In 2017, Pew Research did a study to understand what people in our country believe about God and specifically how they believe God intervenes in their life.

- i. Do you believe God Intervenes In your everyday life?
- We believe God is sovereign. We believe God is in control of all things. We believe that God is involved in our lives.
 1. So what does that practically mean?
 - Do you believe that God will mess with your day if you sin?
 1. Like if your struggling with road rage in the car...do you believe God will intentionally give you more red lights?
 - Do you believe that the reason your struggling with illness is because God is punishing you for something?
 - Do you believe that God is watching your every move and ready to send hardship into your life to make you pay?
 - I honestly believe that many of us would not admit to thinking that about God but there is something in the back of our head that wonders...



ii. **Look at these stats** (screen).

- Amongst Christians in our country...81% believe that God has rewarded them In their life and 47% believe that God has (not will) punished them.
 1. Now, look at Evangelicals...out of every Christian group, evangelicals have the highest numbers...96% believe that God has rewarded them and 56% believe that God has punished them.
 2. 56% (more out of any group!!) of evangelicals believe that God has punished them!!!
 3. We'll come back to that in a second...
- But I also want you to see down under the people who are not religious.
 1. You have atheists with super low numbers...that makes sense because atheists don't believe In the existence of God.
 2. Agnostics, who are not against the Idea of a god but don't have any defined beliefs about God have slightly higher numbers.
 3. But look at the "Nothing" group. These are people who are referred to as the NONES.
 4. Meaning they choose to have no affiliation or stated belief in regard to God.
 5. This Is the statistical category that we are seeing the most growth in amongst younger generations who are deconverting...
 6. Among the nones, 60% believe God has rewarded them and 41% believe that God has punished them.



- This Is interesting, because even amongst people who reject any sort of defined belief about God, there Is something Inside of them that still believes there is a god who Is using his power to either reward or punish them.

d. Here Is why this Is Important...

- i. 40% of people In our country, of all beliefs, believe that there Is god who has punished them at some point.
 - And as our country becomes more post-Christian, we are going to have more and more people who will reject the God of the Bible or deconvert from Christianity because they have a misguided view on what the Bible says about how God Intervenes In their life.
 1. They are rejecting this anxiety-Inducing Idea that there Is a God who Is always watching and ready to strike when they mess up.
 2. And they should reject that Idea...because that Is not what the Bible says about God.

II. WHAT IF JESUS IS REAL?

a. And so, this morning, we are going to start a series entitled: IF JESUS IS REAL?

- i. And here Is what I want to do.
 - I want to be clear on what the Bible says about Jesus...and the role that Jesus, as the Son of God, plays In how God Intervenes In our life.



- Because I believe that one of the problems we have today in Christianity is that there is a disconnect between the saving work of Jesus and the everyday ways in which God works/intervenes in our life.
- ii. **And so, if you're one of those people who is struggling with your view of God in this way...here is my goal for today...**
- That you would walk away clear on what the Bible says about how God intervenes in our life and the role that Jesus plays in that.
 - Because if Jesus is real, then today I have some really good news and stats are showing that so many people have a wrong view of the what the Bible says about God...

b. So, today, we are going to talk about how God, through Jesus, intervenes in our lives in response to our sin.

- i. Because this is really the heart of the issue...what does God do when we mess up?
- And I want us to study Isaiah 53 together to answer this question.
 1. Isaiah is a book written 700+ years before Jesus even walked on this planet.
 2. And the reason I want to go to Isaiah is because we are going to see how God planned, and it was even written down centuries before Jesus came, to intervene in our lives.



III. ISAIAH 53

a. So, If you have a Bible, open it to Isaiah 53.

- i. Isaiah was a prophet that spoke the words of God to the people of Judah.
 - Now, most of the time, the job of the prophet was to warn the people of God that they were not following God and that they needed to change their ways and begin to follow God and obey His Word.
 1. And many times in the Old Testament, God did threaten punishment on his people for their disobedience.
 - But, In the book of Isaiah, not only does Isaiah warn God's people about their sin, Isaiah also prophesies about what God Is ultimately going to do about their sin.
 1. What God's plan will be to rid His people and the earth from sin once in for all.
 2. And in our passage this morning, in v.1, this plan of God to ultimately defeat sin Is referred to as the "arm of the LORD."

ii. **Read Isaiah 53:1.**

- Now, when you hear ARM OF THE LORD, what does that make you think?
- I think of power and strength.
 1. Here Is God flexing his muscle.
 2. No longer tolerating sin In his creation.
 3. Or maybe you think: *"Here Is that Insecure bully ready to strike because his people are not loving him as they ought."*
- Well, as we study the rest of ch.53, we're going to learn what the "arm of the Lord" is - God's ultimate plan to deal with sin once and for all.



b. Read Isaiah 53:2-3.

- i. Remember this Is a prophesy.
 - The Scripture Is telling God's people what God plans to do In the future In response to their disobedience.
 - We have the privilege of being on the other side of this and looking back and now being able tp piece together what Isaiah was actually saying.
- ii. And what Isaiah Is saying right here In v.2-3 Is that the arm of the Lord, God's ultimate display of strength and power, God's plan to rid the world of sin....
 - Is a person...and not just any person...
 1. But a person who was not majestic...
 2. He was not beautiful in appearance...
 3. He was not famous...not rich...
 4. Rather, he was despised, he was rejected, and he experienced grief and sorrow like we do.
- iii. You know, as a parent (I have a 5 and 6 year old)...and when they are not doing what I am asking them to do...what's easy to do Is to take my arm...and grab them by their arm and squeeze firmly...
 - In order to communicate my authority over them. To communicate my strength, my size, my position as their parent...
- iv. But I have also learned that what Is more effective, what Is more loving, what gets through to my kids better...



- Is to get down on one knee...down to their level...and use my arm to gently grab their arms...
 - And gently seek to understand what Is going on with them so I can Instruct them more effectively.
 - See, down here...this Is incarnational.
 1. As a parent, I am not a child.
 2. But out of love, I am getting on my child's level and teaching them from here.
 - And up here...where I exert my authority and position...I'm kind of like an overlord...who expects full obedience...even If there Is no understanding.
- v. **And as we read the Bible, we do learn that God Is Indeed our Lord and our King.**
- And he does have authority over us.
 - He Is holy and he demands obedience.
 - And In response to our disobedience he will flex his arm...
 1. But to our surprise, we learn here In Isaiah that God's arm....Is Incarnation.
 2. Sending His Son, Jesus, to be among us...
 - That hardly sounds like an Insecure bully who Is just keeping a record of all of the ways we mess up and sends hardships Into our lives as punishment...
 1. It seems like God's approach may be different.



c. Let's keep reading - **Read Isaiah 53:4-6.**

i. Let's start at v.6 for a second here...

- The Bible is making a pretty radical statement here about every single human being...the Bible just made a statement about you and me personally...
 1. It says that all of us have gone astray, turned away from God to our own way.
 2. That all of us have sinned against God.
- What does that even mean?

ii. The Bible gives us an illustration in Luke 15 - a well known story called the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

- Basically, we have this son of a wealthy Father...
 1. This Son lives with His Father and enjoys his Father's wealth.
- But the Son decides that life would be better if he could still have his Father's wealth...but be without the Father...and go live somewhere else and do whatever he wants.
 1. And so, he demands an inheritance from His Father and takes off.
- This is an example of sin...
 1. God is our creator...He is our designer...
 2. And He has given us life on this planet.
 3. All that we have is His!
 4. And He calls upon us to live our lives a certain way...
 5. Because as our creator, He deserves our reverence and He also knows better than we do on how we should live.



6. So, when we obey His word, not only do we give glory and honor to Him as our creator...we also are trusting him that our joy and happiness is found in living in the way that He has told us to live.
- Yet, we would rather take the things that he has given us...our very lives...and go and live how we want...
 1. We want the Father's creation but not the Father.
 2. This is why Romans 14:23 says - *"For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin."*
 3. Whenever we are living our lives apart from what God has told us, we are sinning.
 - And just like in the prodigal son, whenever we live in sin, apart from God, it only brings brokenness and pain into our lives.
 1. Because God doesn't give us His Word just because He's a bully that wants to give us a list of arbitrary rules to live by.
 2. No, God gives us His Word because this is the way to life and joy in Him!
- iii. **So, back to Isaiah 53...we learn that every one of us has gone astray, all of us have turned away from God to our own way.**
- And there is cost associated with our sin.
 1. It is a form of injustice.
 2. It is an offense against God.
 3. And the Scriptures do tell us that God demands a payment...He demands justice for His creation rejecting Him and going their own way...



- Think about the parable of the Prodigal Son again.
 1. The son ran into hardship living his own way and eventually comes back to his Father.
 2. Because he realized there truly wasn't life without the Father.
 3. And the son assumes he is going to have to work for his Father to make up for what he had done.
- iv. **And so, the question for us is this...if we have all gone astray...and God demands justice for our sin...what happens to us now?**
 - And Isaiah 53:5 says...that the arm of the Lord...His Son, Jesus, who came to our level...
 1. **Read v.5 and v.6b.**
 - Back to the Prodigal Son.
 1. The Son knows there is a cost to his sin against His Father. He just spent his entire inheritance.
 2. Imagine if you had a million bucks in your retirement fund.
 3. And your kid demanded to have his portion of it now and you gave it to him.
 4. And he went off and spent all of it on useless things.
 5. And is now back at your house because he has nothing.
 6. **THERE IS COST ASSOCIATED WITH THIS.**
 7. You now have \$500,000 less dollars in your retirement!



8. And we read in Luke 15 that the Father accepts His Son with open arms back into his home...with no need to work or pay off this debt he had now Incurred.
 9. But, there was a cost to this!
 10. It's just a cost that the Father decided to take upon Himself.
- God Is telling his people In Isaiah, 700 years before Jesus Is even born, that the way He Is going to deal with our sin, Is He Is going to send His Son to be with us, and He will be the one who will pay the cost associated with our sin.
 1. Someone needed to be pierced for our sin.
 2. Someone needed to be crushed for our sin.
 3. Someone needed to be chastised for our sin.
 - Statistics show that most people believe this about God.
 1. That someone needs to be punished.
 2. Statistics also show that we believe that we are the one's that God will direct that punishment.
 3. Statistics show that evangelicals, more than anyone, believe that we are the one's that God will direct that punishment.
 - But the Bible says that it is actually the ARM OF THE LORD that will take on that punishment.
 1. So that we may be at peace with God.
 - God sent his son Jesus, to be with us, to be one of us, and to take upon Himself the COST of our sin, and nail It to the cross.



- v. **Here Is where we need to be really clear about what the Bible says about God and how he responds to our sin.**
- He's not a bully with a magnifying glass looking for ants to cook.
 - He's our all-powerful, holy Creator who loves us and wants what is best for us.
 1. And If we will trust In Him, If we will surrender our lives to Him...He Is willing to take every bit of the debt that we have built up through our sin and look to the cross of Jesus Christ as the payment.
 2. And what this means for the Christian...Is that there Is NO MORE PUNISHMENT FROM GOD FOR YOU.
 3. God will not punish His children.
 4. Because the entire cost of your sin, past, present, and future was satisfied by Christ on the cross.
 - This Is why it confounds me that so many evangelicals believe that God has punished them...
 1. Because that belief goes against the very heart of what the Bible says about God In both the Old and New Testaments.
- vi. **We have a God...who flexes his arm...by becoming one of us...and taking the cost of our sin upon Himself.**
- And I know that there are many people here today and watching online...that need their conception of God to be healed and changed.
 1. Because you are not one mistake away from bringing the wrath of heaven upon your life.



2. God Is not ready to strike you with Illness or hardship to make you pay for your sin.
- No, He Is a God who understands your hardship and, because of the cross, Is not angry with you...
 1. In fact, the cross says that He Is utterly pleased and delighted by you.

IV. PALM SUNDAY

a. Today is Palm Sunday... the Sunday before Easter where we commemorate the moment where Jesus arrived In Jerusalem days before he would be arrested and taken to the cross to be pierced for our Iniquities.

- i. Mike and Christine Miller read the account for us from the Gospel of Luke.
 - Read Luke 19:41 - *“And when [Jesus] drew near [to Jerusalem] and saw the city, He wept over It.”*
 1. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because He knows that the reason He Is there...Is to save them.
 2. To take their sin upon his shoulders and nail It to he cross.
 3. It’s what the prophets have been saying Is going to happen!
 4. And Jesus Is weeping because He knows most of them are going to miss It.
 5. They are not going to believe.



- ii. The Bible does say that there is a cost to our sin and that there will be a judgement for our sin.
 - And for those who trust that Jesus has paid that cost on their behalf on the cross... they will be found to be righteous in that judgement and will be given eternal life.
 - But for those who miss it, who don't believe, who continue to go their own way...they will bear the cost of their own sin in that judgement.
 - And Jesus is weeping over Jerusalem...because so many will miss it.

b. And that's my question for all of us this morning...do we trust in Jesus or will we miss Him?

- i. It's one thing to reject the insecure bully in the sky who is waiting for us to mess up so He can punish us.
 - But that is not the God of the Bible.
 - The God of the Bible is a God who meets us where we are at, shows us the way of life, and takes upon Himself the cost of our sin.
- ii. And that grace is available to you today if you would place your trust in Jesus.
 - And all that means is to confess that you are a sinner who has gone your own way...the Bible says that's all of us.
 1. And that you need what Jesus did upon the cross to pay that cost.
 2. And that you now want to surrender your life to Jesus, follow Him, and follow the way that God has called us to.



3. Because you trust that He Is good, he knows better, and He Is leading us to life and joy.

c. And do, here Is what I would like to do...

- i. **When you came In, you probably picked up a communion cup...**
 - If this morning, you have already placed your trust In Jesus.
 1. I want you to take the next few minutes and I want you to meditate on what Christ has done for you on the cross.
 2. As you eat the cracker, meditate that He was crushed for your Iniquity.
 3. As you drink the juice, meditate that He was pierced for your transgressions.
 4. And the truth that because of the cross, God will never punish you...that He Is pleased with you.
- ii. **But, If you're here or online and you have not trusted In Jesus...don't worry about communion...**
 - I want you to take this moment now to pray and consider Jesus.
 - And I want you to ask: Am I like the people In Jerusalem....
 1. Even though I have heard this message of his grace...have I missed Him.
 - Because you can pray right now and be like the prodigal son who decided to come home.
 - And because of the cross, the cost has been paid.

V. PRAY

