 **Community Group Discussion Guide**

Palm Sunday – March 28, 2021

**I. Discussion of Scripture:**

**Today is Palm Sunday.** For context, Jesus has just raised Lazarus (John 12), which stirs the people’s hearts toward this King who might rescue them from the Romans. Because of this hope, the people converge to celebrate his arrival into Jerusalem. Jesus, in fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, enters the city on a young donkey. The people “spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the [palm] trees and spread them on the road” (Matt. 21:8), and they cry, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (John 12:13; see also Ps. 118:25-26)

Thus begins what is known as the passion week or the week leading up to the crucifixion.

**Isaiah the Prophet**

Isaiah wrote approximately 700 years before Christ. His book of prophesy is arguably the most important prophesy in the Old Testament. It is primarily written as poetry with a section of prose in the middle. While our passage today, Chapter 53, tells primarily of Jesus’s crucifixion, other passages in Isaiah foretell of his birth and life.

**Isaiah 53 (ESV)
 1** Who has believed what he has heard from us?
     And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
**2** 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.
**3** 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.
**4** Surely he has borne our griefs
     and carried our sorrows;
 yet we esteemed him stricken,
     smitten by God, and afflicted.
**5** 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.
**6** 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.
**7** 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.
8 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?
**9** 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.
**10** 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.
**11** 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.
**12** 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.

**Let’s break it down…**

**1 Who has believed what he has heard from us?
     And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?**

This is seen again in John 12:37-41:

**37**Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. **38**This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

“Lord, who has believed our message
    and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

**39**For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

**40**“He has blinded their eyes
    and hardened their hearts,
so they can neither see with their eyes,
    nor understand with their hearts,
    nor turn—and I would heal them.”

**41**Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

**2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
     and like a root out of dry ground; (NIV)**

This is a continuation from the 11th chapter of Isaiah:

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
    from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

 **he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
     and no beauty that we should desire him.**

Compare this with the description of David in 1 Samuel 16:12:

Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome.

**3 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.**

What does “Hide their faces” mean? Does this mean he caused fear in people? Probably not. A clue can be found at the beginning of Isaiah in 1:15 when the prophet, speaking as God, says:

When you spread out your hands,
    I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
    I will not listen;

**For Discussion:**

* + 1. We properly ignore Jesus’s physical appearance and focus on his spiritual side. However, based on Isaiah and what we know from the New Testament, how do you believe Jesus looked? What image did he try to convey (if any)?
		2. In Isaiah 53:3, we see that the servant is “despised”, “rejected”, and is a “man of sorrows” who is “acquainted with grief.” How does Jesus fit this description?

**More Break Down…**

**5 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.
6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
     we have turned—every one—to his own way;
 and the Lord has laid on him
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 by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
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12 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.**

**Paradoxical Question #1** – What does that mean?

**4 Surely he has borne our griefs
     and carried our sorrows;
 yet we esteemed him stricken,
     smitten by God, and afflicted. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
     yet he opened not his mouth;
 like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
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**8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
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10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
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     he shall see his offspring;
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 the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.**

**Paradoxical Question #2** – What does THAT mean?

Note: Verses 7 and 8 where what was being read by the Ethiopian eunuch when he encountered Philip on the road.

**Acts 8:34** And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” **35**Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.

**More Questions:**

1. Using the entire chapter 53, what does that tell us about Jesus?
2. Using the eunuch’s question, how do we know this was not talking about another prophet or apostle/disciple? Could it have been Isaiah or Moses or Paul or Peter or Stephen?