

## **“The High Price of Caring”**

**Isaiah 53:1-6**

Preached by

Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor

First Baptist Church

Frankfort, Kentucky

March 6, 2016

### **Communion Devotion**

This morning we turn our attention to the Old Testament to prepare our hearts and minds for communion. This is because the sacrifices Jesus made for each of us have their roots in the Old Testament, especially in the beautifully written Servant Songs found in Isaiah. (Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12)

These are four songs penned by the prophet in the second portion of Isaiah, chapters 40-55. These words were written to homesick Jews who were taken into captivity by the Babylonians after the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, beginning in 597 BC. These displaced Hebrew pilgrims were desperately searching for hope and help.

The Servant Songs describe a future leader known for his compassion, courage and faithfulness to the people he would be sent by God to serve. He would pursue justice and peace for all the nations of the world as he endeavored to model the heart and nature of God through all he said and did.

I am confident the Servant Songs in Isaiah profoundly influenced Jesus. God used these words to help shape and mold Jesus' public ministry.

When you line up the life Jesus lived and the kind of leader he became with the Servant Songs, you discover they completely overlap. In other words, Jesus embodied all of the prophet's hopes and dreams.

**What do you think Jesus learned by studying the Servant Songs?** This question is too broad for me to answer in the time I have today, so let me pull out one small slice of today's text to answer this question. I'll choose a part of this Sunday's reading that has always intrigued and interested me, Isaiah 53:5b.

**“By his wounds we are healed.”**

When Jesus came across this sentence, do you think he sat the scroll on his lap and pondered the meaning of this declaration? I would have, and I suspect he did, too.

Do you think it disturbed or confused him? It certainly could have. After all, he was human.

Do you think he might have wondered why the prophet did not write...“By his strength he would heal them...or by his power he would heal them...or by his might he would heal them...or by his persuasive skills he would heal them...or by his political clout he would heal them...or by his faith he would heal them...or by his close connection to God he would heal them...or by his great intellect he would heal them...or by...”

There is any number of combinations we could substitute for the words the prophet wrote. Why did he say ‘by his wounds he would heal them’?

**What message was the prophet sending to Jesus and what did Jesus take away from this choice of words?** I pondered this for some time last week, and this is what I think.

The prophet's words, “By his wounds he will heal them,” taught Jesus healing comes with a price, sometimes a very high price. If he was going to heal broken spirits, broken hearts, broken bodies and ultimately a broken world, it would require the best of him and everything from him.

This mission would not be an easy one and there would be no shortcuts. It would demand that he make radical changes to his lifestyle and often make bold sacrifices on behalf of others.

Every day, he would be called upon to be wise, strong, courageous, thick-skinned, determined, loyal, patient, generous, compassionate, humble, merciful and selfless. He could never let his guard down and coast lest he succumb to the temptation to make his ministry more about him than the ones he was sent by God to help.

At all times and in all places, Jesus would need to value love over hate, serving over being served, sacrifice over self-indulgence, truth over deception, justice over injustice, inclusion over exclusion, generosity over greed, humility over arrogance, forgiveness over revenge, healing over hurting and peace over war.

When the road would get rough, he would need to keep traveling.

When the religious authorities would turn against him because he would expose their hypocrisy, he would need to be courageous and continue speaking truth to power.

When the people others ignored or neglected would come to him day and night for help, he would need to respond to them like they were a part of his own family.

When he would face criticism for being kind to the outcasts and welcoming the disenfranchised, he would need to love them anyway.

When his disciples would abandon him, he would need to go it alone.

When he would be tempted to run away from the soldiers coming to get him in the Garden of Gethsemane, he would need to stand firm.

When he would be arrested, beaten, humiliated and crucified, he would need to be strong by forgiving them.

When it seemed all hope was gone and his enemies had won, he would need to keep on believing.

I believe this is how the prophet's words spoke to Jesus as he studied this Servant Song.

**How do they speak to you?**

What are you facing now that requires the best of you and everything from you? Who needs you to love them like Jesus loves each of us?

Who needs you to put your dreams and plans on hold? Who needs you to reallocate the use of your money? Who needs you to make time for them in your busy schedule?

Who needs you to be brutally honest with them and tell them what they need to hear instead of what they want to hear? Who needs you to love them unconditionally?

Who needs you to roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty? Who needs you to walk alongside them, offering sound advice and strong encouragement? Who needs you to believe in them when all others have given up on them?

Who needs you to show your scars and tell your story? Who needs to hear how you handled your mistakes, your struggles, your self-doubt and your worst moments? Who needs to hear about your journey from futility to recovery?

One reason we come to this table each month is to draw strength from the one who understands what it means to be, in the words of Dutch Theologian and priest Henri Nouwen, a wounded healer. Join me as we come into his presence.