

Like Sheep We Have Gone Astray

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[0 : 0 0] chapter we read. In Isaiah chapter 53 and if we could look again at verse 6, Isaiah 53 verse 6, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. I'm sure Isaiah 53 is the best known of all the Old Testament chapters and it's a chapter of course as we know that is absolutely full of Jesus Christ. And in fact the account that Isaiah gives us of Jesus is so spot on and so accurate that you could say well this could actually be taken out of the Old Testament, put into the New Testament and at the appropriate places insert the name of Jesus because it is so so accurate and it's amazing to think that this prophecy was given hundreds of years before. And here we see that the great plan of salvation, God's great purpose in saving people is being worked out. You would think that Isaiah had been an eyewitness of what had taken place but he wasn't. This was all revealed to him. And it's here we see Jesus as the suffering servant. It's really quite a remarkable description of who Jesus is and what he had to suffer and what he had to endure. And it is of course as we see here the great display of love. Now sometimes we find it hard to kind of figure out exactly what love is because so often when we listen to our songs or love songs or read our love poems or go to literature that may be what we would think of writings of love and while all of this is true we often tend to think of love in relation to our senses of what we see or what we hear or what we taste or what we smell. For instance we might say well I love the smell of freshly cut grass. You might say I love the sound of the waves crashing on the sea. You might say I love the taste of strawberries and cream and various things like that. We often do it with the same with regard to people. We do it with regard to beauty too. To all these things and often we say well I love this, I love that, I love it, I love it because it's something we often think of love with regard to what appeals to us. But you know love, real love gets its hands dirty. Real love is often hurt. Real love costs. Real love costs. And you find that within families. That love actually costs because the love is often tested and tried in different ways. But that proves the nature of love. And so when we come to what we see of God's love we see just the extent and the largeness of God's love. It's a love that is beyond parallel. It's the most extraordinary love. And we see that love in the giving of the Son because in eternity, in the councils of eternity, the Father is saying to the Son, you know what I want you to do is to go into this world, not taking the appearance of human nature but by actually becoming human. You

will become a man and you are going to come by the way of natural birth. Although you will never lose who you are and so we know the great mystery. And it remains a mystery.

People say explain to me, well we can't. The Bible says this, greatest mystery of Godliness is Christ manifest in the flesh. And as long as something's a mystery that's what it is.

And it is a great mystery where the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and the seed that the Holy Spirit brought into bearing into Mary, although Jesus was born of her substance, yet he was completely free from all the defilement of sin. He took a new nature to himself that he never had before. Now that's what faith does. Faith believes it. Faith says, why, yep, I believe that. But to properly be able to understand it, that's why it says greatest that mystery because there is an element of mystery attached to it. And so the Father is saying to the Son, this is what I want you to do, but it's not going to be easy.

Because everywhere you go, we talk today of fake news. Well, everywhere you go, there's going to be fake news spoken about you. And that's exactly how it was. They called him a drunkard. They called him a glutton. They said that his miracles he performed through the power of the devil. So he was being misrepresented everywhere he went. Lies told about him. And that's difficult to live with. And then on top of that, the people who he came to, they didn't want him. And above all, the religious leaders, they opposed his every move. And in the end, they had him put to death. And the Father is saying to him, you are going to suffer so much in this world. Because you see, Jesus was free of sin. You and I don't understand that. When a person is converted, you know, there was a day I thought before I was a Christian that when a person was converted that they didn't sin anymore. They do, they're just exactly the same. But the only difference is that there's a new power at work, the power of God. The old is still there fighting away. But there's a new power. The Holy Spirit is at work within the heart. That's what brings a conflict in the life of the Christian. But

[6 : 42] Jesus, he had no inclination towards sin. He wasn't he wasn't a sinner. So this world was particularly painful to Jesus. That's why we find him at the grave of Lazarus on that occasion, not only weeping but groaning. He groaned in his spirit. Because he could see what death really is, its ugliness, its the enmity of death at a level that you and I cannot see. And so the Father is saying to the Son, this is the kind of world you're going to go into. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to send you into this world.

And Jesus says, to do thy will, I take delight. So there's the love of the Father and the love of the Son in coming into this world. So that's a great plan of salvation. So that's what this chapter is really speaking to us about. And before we look at verse 6 here, we see that it tells us in verse 5, but he was wounded for our transgressions. And you know, if you can put your name in there and say, well, he was wounded for my transgression.

He was crushed for my iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought me peace. And with his stripes I was healed. Are you able to say that today? Are you able to put yourself into that? If you are, you're the most privileged person in the world. If not, it's time that you said, you're self-righteous. I've got to get right with God. Because that's what God did. He sent his Son to do for you what you can't do for yourself. We can't make ourselves right with God. You know, there's a period in our lives where we thought, well, I'm not too bad. God's going to accept me. I'm better than some people. I'm not as good as I should be, but I'm not that bad. That's not how it works. God doesn't do it that way.

Because he sees God looks at us as what we are. And he says, we're sinners. And you cannot rid yourself of it. There is only one way. And that is for my son to become one with you, take your punishment on himself and transfer his righteousness into you. And that's what becoming a Christian is all about, where we take Jesus by faith. And so it says then, all we like sheep have gone astray. Now, the all at the beginning, all we like sheep have gone astray corresponds with the all at the end, all we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Now, while all we would see, hear us, all those today, we could say, all those who are here, who are sitting at the Lord's table.

But I believe it goes further than that because I believe that there will be another communist down the line, some of you in the sides will be taking your place there. And maybe some of you who are in the side seats today should be in the center. Because it's what if if Jesus is done for us, then we ought to be taking your place there. But the fact is, we have all strayed every single one right throughout. It's a universal strain. We, I said, we can use it spiritually, the strain gene from Adam. When Adam fell, he strayed from God. And we inherited that strain. You know how we talk about it? It's we say about the arts in the people. Sometimes we see characteristics. It might be somebody who is witty or somebody who is very nappy at doing things or somebody who is very strong. And people say, but it's in the people. It's, it's, we see mannerisms, we see the people, the expressions, we see resemblances. And we say, it's in the gene. Well, this is a gene spiritually that we got from Adam, that we stray. We've gone, we've gone away from God. That's what happens.

[11 : 13] So what is that? Straying involved for us. Well, it's a lot of things we look at, but a couple of things, for instance, that the cataclysm tells us that involves air. It tells us that there is a want or a lack of original righteousness within us. Now, in the natural world, if a parent, parents die, and they don't have anything, they're living in poverty, then they don't have anything that they can give to their children. They aren't able to pass on any money or property or anything. They don't have anything to pass on. There is a lack on their part that might not have been a lack of love, but there has certainly been a lack of anything to give. Now, since that's how it is, how it was with our first parents, they didn't have, there was a complete lack of original righteousness to give us.

They had originally been made in righteousness right at the very beginning. God made man in his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. But when Adam and Eve fell, that was shattered, that was broken, that was gone, that was lost. They lost the image. And so there is this want of it, with bankrupt, so to speak. So that's one of the things. And then we're also told that there's the corruption of the whole nature. And you see, like produces like. And that's how we are. We can't help it. David said that, Behold, he said, I was shaping in iniquity. I went wrong in the womb. David is saying, there's nothing I could do about it. That's just the way it is. So our whole being is corrupt. Now, it's sometimes hard for us to understand that because sometimes we'll say, Well, I had good parents, I had godly parents or godly grandparents. And sometimes we rely on that and think, Well, that'll stand us in good stead. No, they were sinners too, even if they were godly, they were still sinners.

It's God who worked in their heart saving them. But they're still sinners. So this is the state. This is how we are by nature in this world. And then it, we see that we've all strayed and we're told the manner in which we stay. It's like sheep. All we like sheep have gone astray. And you and I know there is no animal more prone to straying than sheep.

It says in the prophecies, my sheep, my people love to wander. It's a natural to the sheep to stray. And I'm sure that's one of the things you often find at fangsten. When you go out gathering it, it's amazing sometimes how far sheep can actually go. They just have this strain. That's what they do. They're terrible for for strain. They can be very, very, very frustrating. But you know, that's that's that's just the way it is. That's how I think all of us in a natural sense, because there is this bias, as it were, in our life towards sin. It's not it's not something that we work out. It's it's it's already there. And it often throws us as Christians. I remember the first time I ever tried to play bowls, not the 10 pin bowling stuff, but like, like a lawn, the lawn bowls. I still remember the

I can't even remember what you call the wee ball that you put down at the other end, but you you tried and I remember thinking right I'm going to throw this as accurately as I could straight down the middle and I don't want to you out the side. That's funny. And to me, we while to figure out that there is an actual bias in the ball that makes it go like that. It'll either go to the left or to the right. So you this is part of the whole process of the game of how you have to work it in order that it'll come round. It's a buy and you know, we're like that. We have that natural bias towards sin within us. So that when we're converted initially, we think, Oh, that'll be it. You know, it's going to be different notes. Not Yes, it is because there's a new principle at work within us.

[15 : 56] But there is still this meaning towards sin all the time. And it's something that that causes so much grief in the Christian life. You know, sometimes you can start a day and you maybe have a quiet time and you really feel the Lord close to you and you think this is going to be a good day. And you go out and it doesn't take too long until you're being pulled aside. And you see, there's this sympathy with sin and sin is often so attractive. It's dressed up in lovely packages. And before you know it, you're sucked in, you're drawn in. And it causes a lot of pain and grief in the heart of the Christian. Because we have this principle within us working that is against sin and that hate sin. And yet there's this principle still at work that sides with sin. And so this is all of what the Lord Jesus, of course, has come to deal with. And this string, of course, takes us into very dangerous places. You go out in the mood, you go for a walk. And very often you'll see the carcass of a sheep, maybe a sheep that has fallen off a ledge or a sheep that has maybe got stuck in a bog and couldn't get itself out. Sheep, we know at lambing time, they're prone sometimes to rolling over on their back and they can't sort themselves.

Sometimes they can, but often they can't. And they're dependent on someone to come and roll them back. Otherwise, the hoodies or blackbacks will be at them, maybe taking out the eyes so that the sheep is such a defenseless animal and it's such a, such a straying animal as well. And there's so much danger for it and in it. And so it is for our shells. And then we see it tells us that we have turned everyone to his own way, all turned everyone to his own way. Now, we all stray, but we stray in different ways. Like for instance, Paul would say, well, you know, I was a, I was a persecutor. I was a blasphemer.

And then Sakeis would say, well, I was a covetous thief. And my Nazi might say, well, I was, I was an idol that has murdered us. That's what the scripture shows. That's what these people were known for. Every person had different, there were different things to say for you.

If I was to, we all have particular, we all sin, but there are different weaknesses within different people. But would, there are certain areas that were more prone for different people.

And one person would say, well, I can't identify with that in the same way. And the great, the not the great thing, the awful thing is Satan knows our weaknesses. He knows how to get us. He knows how quickly we can go from there, from there to there. And he's got, he's got so many different arrows and he fires these arrows. And so, the straying is, as we say, it's just such part and partial of our life. And you know, when we say that, you could say there's a thousand and one ways to stray, but there's only one way to follow.

[19 : 23] That's what the Bible tells us, that there's a broad road and there's a narrow road. The broad road, everybody is on that straying. And the Bible shows that that's the easy road, because you just go as you are, the way you're born, the way you are. If God leaves you alone, you're on that broad road. But there's a narrow road. That's a road that Jesus takes us on.

And sometimes it's a testing road and a difficult road. But it's a road that is, that is full of blessing. And that's what we see here. But then we see the remedy just in a word, what has happened here and the Lord, everyone's turned to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Here's this great one, what's wonderful, bursting into the darkness. Here we're all these sheep and they're all straying, all going their own way, helpless. What's going to happen? Here's the great shepherd coming. And God, we see here, has put out, and that's what he's done. The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Now the word here, laid, has the idea of a violent collision, to strike violently.

And that's what the Lord has done. And this word, iniquity, as I say I use it here, has a reference not just to her transgression, but the guilt that's attached as well. And I suppose along with guilt, there's always shame. So then it catches all that. And you know, that's part of what sin is. You know, there's all, there's shame in sin. Often, often there isn't obvious to ourselves. If we could see sin for what it really is, my word, we, our minds would be in hinged with the level of shame and guilt that's in it.

But we often don't see that. Every so often in our life, maybe because of sin, we become utterly ashamed. And shame is a horrible thing, isn't it? Sure, we've all been through at some stages in our life, things are, you see, I'm really ashamed of that. Well, you know, that's part of what Jesus has gone to the cross for, to deal with the shame that's attached to sin. He's gone to the cross to deal with the guilt that's attached to sin. You know, when you feel guilty about something, it's awful. And there is guilt attached to sin, well, Jesus has gone to deal with that as well. He's gone to deal with the iniquity, the twistedness that's within us, the perversion, the transgression which breaks out into our life, the sin which is missing the mark, all of these things. He's gone to the cross.

And the Father has laid on him, struck violently on him, the violence striking that we deserve. And the thing that we've got to remember is that God, as God, cannot ignore sin, cannot turn a blind eye to it. You know, we sometimes in life will turn a blind eye to things himself.

[22 : 40] It's all right. God can't. The nature of God is such that he cannot turn a blind eye. Sin is an offence to him and he has to deal with it. And the only way he can deal with it is by transferring our sin to someone else. And that's exactly what he has done with the Lord Jesus. And because of that, the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. We can go back to verse 5 and say, well, he was wounded for our iniquity and such like.

Today that's what we are remembering, what Jesus has done for us. And I would say to you, today you're a strange Christian. And we all strange Christians sometimes, sometimes like Peter, you know, it tells us in the Bible that at one stage Peter followed Jesus afar off. Good thing following Jesus. Bad thing it was far off. If Peter had been following closer, he might not have ended up denying Jesus. You know, for following far off, it's a dangerous place. Closer we are to the shepherd, the safer we are. And that's one of the beauties of the Lord's supper. The Lord's table is it kind of brings us back. So it's an opportunity of coming back. If we found ourselves wandering and we're saying, you know, I'm not where I should have been. Not where I used to be. I need to get back to where I was. Well, today is an opportunity of getting back. And if you're straying in a sense that you've always been straying, and you say it yourself, you know, I've never actually come. Or maybe you have, but you've wandered far away. It's time to come back. The opportunity is here. And

I would hope that today, because as we said earlier on, Emmanuel, God with us, the Lord is present here today. You know, you're often reading the Bible of how Jesus, it says, he passed by. Now, since he's passing by today, and this is a wonderful opportunity of closing in with Jesus and having a wee prayer in your heart and saying, Lord, come into my heart.

It's time. It's time I got sorted with you. Just come into my heart. Be my Lord. Be my Savior. Amen. Lord, we give thanks for reflecting upon your word for a little here. And we pray that as we will shortly be going to your table, that you will bless us and that you will continue to watch over us and do us good. We give thanks, Lord, for all that you are and all that you do for us and all that you give to us. Continue with us. We pray for giving us our every sin in Jesus' name. We ask it. Amen.

We're going to sing from Psalm 118. Psalm 118. As we see the elements are on the table. And just, I don't know, in case there's any visitors or anybody that has come from another congregation and is a member in good standing, then you're always, you're welcome to partake.

[26 : 01] It's, although it's a carl away communion today, it's not exclusive to the carl away. As already is seen, there are people from out with carl away here. So it is the Lord's table. So you're welcome to take your place at the table. But we're going to sing Psalm 118 from sing Psalms. And we're singing from verse 17 to verse 26. I shall not die, but I shall live the Lord's great works I will proclaim. The Lord severely chastened me and rescued me from death's domain. Throw away the gates of righteousness. I'll enter and give thanks to God. This is the gate of God through which the righteous come before the Lord. You answered me, I will give thanks. Salvation comes from you alone. The stone the builders had refused has now become the cornerstone. And so on to verse 26, Psalm 118, verses 17 to 26. I shall not die, but I shall live the Lord's great works I will proclaim. The Lord severely chastened me and rescued me from death's domain. Throw away the gates of righteousness. I'll enter and give thanks to God. This is the gate of God through which the righteous come before the Lord. You answered me, I will give thanks.

Salvation comes from you alone. The stone the builders had refused has now become the cornerstone. The Lord himself has done all this. It is a mile, the inner sight. This is the gate the Lord has made. It led us to great delight. Save us, O Lord, we humbly pray. O Lord, we pray. Grant us success. Peace, blessings come in God's great name.

Give from the Lord, house we will place.

I'm just going to come down to the table in a minute. But we're reading in Isaiah 53, and I just wanted two minutes, about those who come to the Lord's table. And in verse 1 it says, Who has believed what they heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Who has believed what they heard from us? As it says elsewhere, who has believed a report? Well, the Christian believes. That's the first thing you do. You might not understand everything, but you believe everything that the word says. You wouldn't be at the table today if you didn't believe everything. I would add again, you maybe don't understand everything. Maybe there's things in the Word of God that baffle you, but you believe it.

You believe this word. The second thing I would say is, it tells us here, he was, he had no form or majesty that we should look on him, and no beauty that we should desire him. That's the second thing. God's people desire Jesus. The world doesn't. The world doesn't. And can I say to you, if you're outside of the table, and you're saying in your heart, you know, there's a growing desire in my heart for Jesus. I would say that's God working in you. Because naturally, people don't desire Jesus. They may admire the good things he did. They may say he was a great teacher, but they don't desire him. They don't see beauty in him. If you're beginning to see that, then I would say that is from the Lord.

[32 : 20] But God's people at the table today, you do believe that. And the third thing is what we said earlier on. He was wounded. You're able to say he was wounded for my transgression.

He was crushed for my iniquities. Upon him was a chastisement that brought my peace. And with his stripes, I am healed. I was going to read the one that is given to us in 1 Corinthians.

And we read there in 1 Corinthians in chapter 11. It tells us, sorry, in chapter 11 verse 23, for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, also he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is a new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he come. Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself and so eat of the and then so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

That is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged and so on. And we read of how the Lord on the night when he broke bread that he gave thanks and we will seek to likewise. Lord of God, as we come to this very powerful moment where we are remembering the death of our Savior, help us Lord to have that focus upon you.

[34 : 36] We live in a world with so many distractions. Even when we come to your house there are loads of distractions. We are easily distracted. We know that there is an enemy who tries to take our mind away from the truth. But we pray that at this time, that as we focus upon taking of the bread and wine, we ask Lord that these everyday things might be blessed and we take it for this time as a spiritual moment and we look on them at this moment as holy things as they reveal to us of who you are and what you have done, how great our Lord is and we ask Lord that you will indeed enrich us and bless us and do us good. Lord, we pray to encourage you people today. Pray for those who feel weak, they are struggling, they are Christians but they are struggling. They feel that they are walking backwards rather than forwards. We pray Lord that you will grant them a strengthening. Pray for those who may be anxious today. Life is filling them with fear. They are unsettled. Might even be anxious right here. Lord, grant them your peace. Lord, we pray for those who may be feel at the end of themselves. They feel that they are in a dark place. Lord, shine your light into their heart. Lord, you people go through so many different experiences. We pray that whatever that experience or whatever you are today, that we may know your presence, that we may know your love, that we may know the touch of your love in the depth of our heart. Do us good then we pray and bless us and take away from us our sin in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Amen. Just a wee word just before we take the bread and the wine. And we are just going to reflect on a few things that the Lord's Supper is teaching us. And the first thing is that we remember. That is what we have come to do today, to remember Jesus.

We have our war memorials and they are there lest we forget. Because we always remember these men and women who gave their lives in the past in order that we might have freedom. Maybe as you look at the names and the war memorials here or anywhere in the island you might see you say, oh that's a relation of mine. That's maybe a granduncle or a great granduncle or somebody there. You might see somebody and say, well he's of my family. And he gave his life for us, for the country. But today we are remembering. And it always helps if we remember, you know sometimes a family, you take out photos. Maybe today with everything so different and digital and everything on phones and screens. But back in the day, not so long ago, you would take out the photos and start going through and you would begin to remember. You would look at it all. I remember that. And maybe you then, when you see that person, you go looking for more photos of them. That's what you do. You remember. Well today this is what we're doing, we're remembering. And I remember when I was a wee person, I was always intrigued with the bread and the wine. I know wine is much more common today.

I always wanted to see and to see how red it was. I didn't treat me. I wanted to see just how red the wine was. And it's a wonderful thing because this is speaking to us of the blood of Jesus being poured out for us and his body broken in order that we might be to go free. So that's the first thing we'll remember. And the second thing I would say is we're obeying. Because Jesus says to do this, do it. And remembrance. We don't come here according just to how we feel. If we came to the Lord's table on how we felt, I'm quite sure maybe one or two of you might not be here today, you're Christians, but you say to yourself, you know, I'm not in a good place today. I don't feel right. Well if we went on how we felt, I'm sure often we wouldn't be there. Sometimes Thomas wouldn't be here in a Sunday morning because he might say, I don't feel right. Don't feel right for people.

But we do it. We have to. And this is one place we have to go. The Lord says, do this. Do it. And remembrance of me. Third thing is it's a communion. It's a communion. And Jesus wants to commune with us. We read in Revelation of how it says, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

[39 : 30] And he says, I want to come in and sit with you. And in a sense, that's what Jesus is doing right now. He's wanting to come close to us. As we take this bread and this wine, he's saying, you know, I really want to come close with you. I want you to really enjoy me and reflect upon what I've done. But we don't only commune with Jesus, we have communion with one another.

Because God will remember the person beside you and in front of you and behind you. It's a person that Jesus has loved as well. He has given his life for the person in front of you beside you.

He and we're all we're family. It's one of the it's one of the great things when you become a Christian. It's a realization. Hey, I've got lots of people. I didn't know how big the family was.

It's a family of God. And so this is all part of it, this communion that we have today. And so we read there again that on that night that it tells us for as you see from the Lord, I also delivered that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread.

And when he had given thanks, he broke it. And he said, this is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same manner, he also took the cup, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he come.