

# Life: Promised Like No Other

February 11, 2015

• *The Bible Studies for Life* lesson for March 1 focuses on Isaiah 53:2-12.

A friend of mine worked for a while as a social worker at a homeless shelter. Some of her clients begged for money on the streets occasionally. They told her people's refusal to give them money was understandable. However, they were extremely hurt when people turned their faces, refusing to speak or even look at them. "It makes us feel like we're invisible," they explained.

## **Hiding our faces (vv. 2-3)**

The Prophet Isaiah said the promised Messiah would have "no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (v. 2). His physical appearance would be unremarkable; casual passers-by might easily ignore him. However, more than simply being ignored, the Messiah would be "despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (v. 3). He would be a man "from whom men hide their faces" (v. 3).

## **Trying to make it on our own (vv. 4-10)**

Why would we hide our faces from the Messiah, the one God sends to save us? Adam and Eve hid because they were ashamed of willfully disobeying God. The consequence of that sin was banishment from the garden and enslavement to a life of painful toil—a curse passed down through all generations

(Genesis 3:8, 17-19).

Isaiah describes the fate of sinful humanity in terms of wandering sheep in search of greener pastures: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" (v. 6). This pointless quest leaves us lost and

alone. Interestingly, Isaiah describes the Messiah as a sheep also—the perfect lamb, willingly led to the slaughter as the guilt offering for our sin. God “laid on him the iniquity of us all”(v. 6). Through the Messiah, God provides a way for humans to cease our wandering, come out of hiding and enjoy fellowship with him.

### **Seeing the light (vv. 11-12)**

Who is this suffering Messiah who would bear our sin? It is Jesus, the “image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15), the one of whom John the Baptist proclaimed, “‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29). Though unremarkable in physical appearance, the God incarnate drew people to him—people desperately seeking rescue from their sicknesses, insecurities and sinful wandering.

A sick woman reached out to touch the Messiah’s coat so she could be healed (Matthew 9:20). A tax collector climbed up in a tree to get a better look at him (Luke 19:4). Children crawled onto his lap and gazed into his face (Luke 18:16). Jesus’ healing of hurting people was one of the reasons the religious leaders of the day connived to murder him. As the prophet said: “By oppression and judgment he was taken away. ... For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken” (v. 8). Jesus was crucified, buried, and God raised him to life on the third day, fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy that after “the suffering of his soul,” the Messiah would “see the light of life and be satisfied” (v. 11).

Jesus’ light is “the light of men” (John 1:4) shining through the darkness of our sin. We have a choice—turn away from his light or look at him, ready to give everything we have in total submission to his will. As God promised, Jesus carried our sins to the cross, bearing a “punishment that (brings) us peace.” He already is looking at us, ready to give us the faith to believe in him as Messiah.