

How are we? Let's get to work and turn to Isaiah 53. I know that's not Luke, but we're going to have to start there in order to get to Luke 17. We honestly have too much to do here, but I'm going to do what I can and then we'll just call it a day. If you missed last week's message, you're going to need to go back and grab it off of either the podcast or our website, read the transcript or do whatever. You're going to need to do that because this is one continuous thought spanning these two messages. In the first part of Luke 17 Jesus tells His disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come,..." He's looking at His disciples and saying, "It is coming for you. It's this inescapable part of life in a fallen world." And we defined sin in one of two ways: it's either pride or it's idolatry. So in idolatry, we find something other than God to make ultimate. So we'll make a relationship ultimate, we'll make money ultimate, we'll make comfort ultimate. You fill in the blank, we'll take something other than God and make it ultimate and pursue it with the passion, zeal and sheer violence that we're supposed to be pursuing God with. And that's one of the temptations. And then the second great temptation is to not like God as He's revealed Himself to us, so we just create our own god. Anytime you take the stance that you don't care what the Scriptures say, this is what you think, you put yourself in a view that says, "I don't care how God's disclosed Himself; I'll tell you what God is like." And although the stance of this type of person usually points to those who believe in the Bible and calls them arrogant, it's this person here who stands all by himself with no history, no orthodoxy and no background and just simply says without anything other than their own intuition, "I'll tell you what God's like." Or they just twist the God of the Bible and go, "Aw, He really wouldn't do that, would He? Is that really the God of the Bible." And those are the two great temptations.

Now, what I said last week when we read that was, "How great is it that Jesus said that these temptations are sure to come?" Let's do this. Can we agree that those temptations really do come? Then can we also agree that sometimes we give in to those temptations either knowingly or unknowingly? Some of you are like, "I can't agree because it's always, not sometimes." So in light of the fact that temptation is sure to come and on occasion we will all knowingly or ignorantly give in to those two temptations, Jesus begins to unpack for the disciples how relationships within the community of believers, how relationships inside the body of Christ, how relationships at a local church are going to have to function with that in sight. Now, before we get into that, it needs a foundation. If you try to just go straight to Luke 17 and build out what Jesus is teaching, it will collapse under the weight of itself and under the weight of sinful human beings. But if we can lay a strong foundation here, we can go over to Luke 17 and build the house.

So let's look at Isaiah 53. Now, over the next two weeks you're going to hear a lot about Jesus. And it's all going to revolve around joy and gladness and you're going to see Jesus in a lot of people's front yards wrapped in lights. And you're going to see Merry Christmas with "Christ" spelled in different colored bulbs than the rest. And you're going to see and hear a lot about Jesus in these next two weeks, and none of it is going to sound anything like Isaiah is going to do. So let's look at what Isaiah, hundreds and hundreds of years before Jesus, has to say about Jesus. Let's look at verse 3. "He was despised and rejected by men;..." Is it not true that every week for the last year and a half we've come in here, we've opened up the book of Luke and we have seen that the vast majority of people around Jesus despise Jesus, demand from Him, hate Him or try to make life difficult for Him? If you'll remember, He rebuked the Pharisees and walked away and just tried to pour into His disciples, and the whole time the Pharisees and Sadducees just continue to follow Him. He is a man despised and rejected.

Let's look at this next line. "...a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;..." Just because Jesus was fully God and fully man, people sometimes get confused about that. What they want to do is say, "There is a part of Jesus that's a man. So this half of Him is man. And there is a part of Him that is God. So this half of Him is God." So when bad things happen to Jesus, the God part of Him goes, "That's alright." The problem with that historically is it's been heretical, but let's just unpack it like this. You will read Scripture and not feel the weight of what Jesus walked in and experienced if you view Him this way. I'll give you some examples. Jesus is told by a runner that His very good friend Lazarus is very sick. So He finishes up what He's doing there because that's what God commanded Him to do and He leaves there. It takes him three days to get to Lazarus, and when He gets in town the women are wailing and mourning. One of them walks up to Him and says, "If You would have gotten here any sooner, You could have saved him." And Jesus, overcome by this moment, falls to His knees on the ground and sobs. The night that Jesus was arrested, it was one of His boys that walked up and kissed Him on the cheek. Betrayed by the inner circle of trust. He is constantly harassed, constantly rejected. He has this deep, deep passion for the nation of Israel, they refuse to listen to him and on separate two occasions He goes up on a hillside, looks over Jerusalem and sobs. He is a man acquainted with sorrow and grief. He understands sorrow and grief. Not to mention the fact that He's murdered in the most horrific way imaginable and had the foreknowledge that it was coming.

Let's look at the next line "...and as one from whom men hide their faces..." Basically what this means is when people would see Him coming, they didn't want to hear what He had to say, so they would turn their heads. It goes on even to this day. Like in that moment where you've got that spiritual weight on you and you would rather watch television than press into the Lord or you'd rather call your friends and hang out and screw around instead of talk with the Lord. That's that same thing. The next line, "...he was despised, and we esteemed him not." It just is a sign of disrespect for the God of the universe. Now these verses build on each other, so verse 4 is going to start giving us clarity into verse 3. Look at verse 4, "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;..." Whose grief and sorrow? Ours. So there's something about the pain, the grief and the sorrow that Jesus endures on earth that's somehow tied to our sorrow and our grief. The book of Hebrews would put it like this. Hebrews 2:16- 18 says, "For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." So the sorrows, grief and temptation are there so that in the cross and for years to come, you don't have a God in the heavens who watches you struggle and scoffs, but rather He is empathetic and merciful because He's been there. So when you got betrayed by that closest of friends, everything in you wanted harm to come and the last thing you want to do is extend mercy, extend grace, you have an empathetic high priest. So when your friend dies or your mom dies or your dad dies and everything in you is going, "I just don't understand this," you don't have a high priest who is not empathetic. He is.

Let's look at this next line. "...yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." The Scriptures say that in the middle of the night Jesus was arrested and He endures six trials. Three of those trials would have been illegal by the laws that were judging Him. At each trial, He is creatively beaten. He is spit upon, He is mocked, He has the beard ripped out of His face, He has the skin lashed off His back, and when all is said and done they drag Him out back, strip Him completely naked and nail Him to wood. In that bloody, horrific scene, anyone with an enlightened mind would have watched that and thought, "That is no way for a man to die." For hours He hung there while the lowest class of humanity you can imagine came out to be spectators. They spat on Him, hurled insults at Him and made fun of Him until His lungs filled with blood and He drowned in his own blood. That's smitten by God.

Now verse 5 is going to build on verse 4. "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;..." Let me unpack the difference between transgressions and iniquities. Transgressions would be an absolute understanding of the breaking of the Law but having no concern. So a transgression is when you go, "I know the

commands of God. I don't care. I'm going my own way." That's a transgression. An iniquity is just a bent. Have you ever noticed that there are times that you try to do right, but it just goes wrong for you? You try to do right and it ends up blowing up on you and you backtrack and look at it and go, "Man, I thought I was doing right." See, there's a way in you that seems right, and in the end it gets everybody killed. That's what the Bible says. Now don't miss me here, because we've got to build this in order to get where we're going. So that thing, all the sorrows and the grief, and that thing we just talked about in the cross, that was your willful disobedience laid on Him and that was your unknowing ignorance laid on Him.

Let's keep reading. "...he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,..." The cross of Jesus Christ brings us peace. The shame and misery that is our daily failure before God was lavished upon Christ so that we are justified before God, can freely come to Him and therefore the chastisement, the punishment for our sin was laid on Him so nobody owes anymore. It's already been paid, so we walk in peace. "...and with his stripes we are healed." Do you want to hear something funny? Last weekend we saw a video testimony of adultery and how God got into adultery and healed. And a couple of weeks ago we heard this testimony that was from everything from jail to drugs to alcohol. And then tonight we heard a sweet little girl who grew up in church every time the door was open and never really outside of moral things did anything wrong, and her soul was just as much of a mess as the dude that had been doing meth for a decade. I have really beautiful children that I want to lead in the way of the Lord. How terrifying is it that even that can become chains that rob of life in Christ?

Let's read this last verse so this can make sense. "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." So forgiveness is not because I'm better this week than I was last week. Forgiveness isn't because I started coming to church. Forgiveness isn't "I watch my mouth." Forgiveness isn't "I'm not who I was back in college." Forgiveness isn't "I read my Bible in the morning." Forgiveness isn't "I watch this kind of movie and I don't watch this kind of movie." Forgiveness isn't "I'm a good person." Forgiveness is owed to and belongs to Christ alone in the cross, purchased for you right standing before God. That's the foundation, which means this. Let me put it simply. You are a constant offender, and every act of willful or ignorant disobedience was punished in Christ on the cross, so that now we stand forgiven by no merit of our own. If you don't get this, you'll have no foundation for where we're going.

Now let's turn to Luke 17. Verse 1, "And he said to his disciples, "Temptations to sin are sure to come,..." Remember a while ago when I said, "Hey, would everyone agree that temptations to sin are sure to come?" and everyone raised their hand? Keep remembering that. And remember when I said, "When those temptations come, most of us will, sometimes if not often, actually give in to those temptations?" Let's keep reading. "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin." This is what we did last week, into the beginning of verse 3, "Pay attention to yourselves." Because remember, the Scriptures are authoritative, they're inerrant and sufficient, but the numbering system is not. And this is one instance where the numbering system is flawed, because that "pay attention" goes with verses 1 & 2, not with 3. So since temptation is sure to come and there will be moments where you knowingly or ignorantly give in to those temptations, here is how life works within the covenant community of faith. Let's say it this way so you can really understand me. This is how life should work biblically for the members of the Village Church within our relationships with one another. "If your brother sins, rebuke him,..." Somewhere along the way, the word "rebuke" started carrying really negative connotations, probably from someone who got rebuked. There are certain times you can give words power, and then there are times you can make a word less powerful. I'll give you an example. "Love" in our culture has practically no meaning, because we "love" everything. "Oh, I love those socks." Seriously? You love those socks? Let's try to define what you mean by that. So that's a word that at one time had an unreal amount of power, and now it's an empty, hollow word. Now I'm not telling you not to tell your

girl you love her. I'm just saying that in our culture, it's a word that has been absolutely robbed of its power. "Rebuke" is a word that has one connotation biblically, but somehow it's been turned into something else. "If your brother sins, rebuke him,..." Now stay within the context. "There will be temptation, there will be times where we knowingly or ignorantly fall into it. Since this is the truth, since this is an unavoidable fact in the fallen world, live with one another in such a way that you can both be engaged and engage your brother over those temptations." Somehow this word "rebuke" has been made this negative "I've got to sit you down and tell you where you have offended God. I mean I'm good, I don't struggle like that, but you have shamed the name of God and I am here to make that right." Can I just throw out a real quick idea? If God needs you to defend Him, I'm no longer worshiping Him. If someone is as pathetic and sad as you in regards to eternity is needed to defend Him, He is not God. So rebuke isn't about defending God. Rebuke is a deep love for a brother that overflows out of an understanding of what happens when sin is full grown. So rebuking a brother and even receiving a rebuke is not some arrogant "I'm better than you, and you had better listen to me" type of conversation. It's birthed out of real community where we sit down with one another and go, "Hey man, I am concerned. I see this in you. What do we do with this? Here's what the Scriptures say. The way you're teaching is no right. The way you're living is not right. This situation isn't being handled correctly." We engage one another. That's how life works within the covenant community. Because there is a very real enemy who is very good at how he attacks, and the front line of defense is the Holy Spirit sealed in us and the weapon He uses is the community of saints. I don't know how "when two or three are gathered in My name, there I will be also" became a verse for prayer meetings. That is not the context of that verse. That verse is found in Matthew 18 over this exact same subject. What He means by that is when we do life together in such a way that we can engage, we can rebuke and we can receive rebuke, then Christ is present in that, pleading with us to move away from the darkness and into the light. I don't know how that verse got robbed of its power. "Oh, there's three of us here, Jesus must be here." Jesus holds everything together with the word of His mouth, He's everywhere. So you have a responsibility to engage me and I have a responsibility to engage you. Because temptation is sure to come, but when temptation takes root and grows into sin, a lot of pain and a lot of suffering, a lot of shame and a lot of hurt await. So we engage, because we don't want that.

Now look at the next flow of thought. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,..." I worry about us. We've gotten much too big. So there's 6,000 people here now across nine services. So what ends up happening when it gets really big is you don't really have that strong sense of community, so you get a lot of weird things happening. Like you get people that are hurting other people and you don't even know that it's going on and the person that got hurt has never really engaged the person that hurt them, so they might not even know that they hurt them. One of the things that I think is pervasive in the Bible Belt is this mentality that business is business and church is church, which is about as ignorant of an assumption as you can fathom. The gospel isn't one of your priorities, it's the thing that infuses and determines all priorities. So church isn't a thing you do, it's the thing we're a part of and it influences every area. So if you're just this scandalous dirt bag in the business world but you love Jesus on Sunday, you're off and wrong, especially if you're taking advantage of the saints. So in that moment, I think you have no fear of God and you're unenlightened or you're just as lost as could be. Now in this He goes, "We go, we sit down, we engage or we are engaged. And if there is repentance in that, we forgive." Now let's define repentance. Repentance is not just, "I'm sorry that you feel that I hurt you." Now sometimes that is the case. Sometimes there really was no hurt, just somebody had some idolatrous relationship that just went bad. But that's what Recovery is for, to work through some of those issues. The difference between genuine repentance and worldly sorrow is almost always movement. It's not just "I'm sorry," but it's a brokenness that says, "I'll do whatever the Lord asks me to do to make that's right. Whether that's counseling, whether that's Recovery, whether that's joining this, whether that's leaving this, I repent." Repentance is a changing of the mind. It's a turning of the direction. So where somebody says, "I'm sorry," but that's not there, there's no real repentance. There might be worldly sorrow but not repentance. If you have children, there's times our children are just sad they got caught. My daughter will cry, she's not brokenhearted that she's sinning. She's just like, "You got me. Dang it!" So if they repent, then you forgive them.

And you also forgive them knowing that sometimes it takes a while before repentance yields the fruit we want to see. Think of it as a baby learning to walk. The baby gets up, starts to walk and takes three or four steps before he falls down. You don't think that those four steps are a failure, you celebrate them. Let me say it this way. Two steps forward and one step back, that's one step forward. So we're gracious along the path of repentance, which is why the next line says if your brother does this to you seven times in one day but he's genuinely repentant, you be gracious to him, you be patient with him, you be merciful to him. You don't pound him and remind him and beat him and make him pay. No, you forgive. Why? Because all you're doing when you refuse to forgive others is you're putting on lenses that have you somehow outside of the free forgiveness and mercy of Christ and you think you deserve forgiveness because of some sort of merit that you've accomplished rather than Christ and Christ alone. You had better not see that way. You're outside the bounds of Christian faith if you won't forgive anybody because they're not as good as you and you would never do anything like that. You did do something like that...to God Himself. Which is why Christ is on the cross. So that's why you have to have that foundation. It can't be willpower that makes you forgive. It has to be an understanding that you're broken, that you have sinned, that you have harmed, that you have belittled and you have mocked the God of the universe. And in so doing, wrath was heaped out on Christ.

So here's the big question: What if they don't repent? What if you sit down with your brother and go, "Hey man, I'm worried about you. You know I love you..." It's never a good idea to rebuke strangers unless God audibly tells you to. "Look buddy, I don't know you, but I don't like it." It's never a good idea to rebuke strangers. It's almost always good to rebuke within a community. And let me specifically push you men on this. If what we've decided about temptation and sin is true, would you not be a fool to neglect to find a group of men and ask them to be this for you? If you knew it was coming and you knew there were going to be times where in your will there was no way you were going to be able to beat it, does it not make you a fool to sit on your hands and just wait for your joy to be taken from you? And if you're going, "Why are you singling out men?," men struggle with relationships far more than women. Men like to keep it surface. We don't get catty with one another, but we keep it surface. So let's talk about TO and Romo, but let's not talk about where we really are, where we're afraid, where we're worried, where our problems are. Men just don't like to share that stuff. Girls can share it real quickly...and then betray one another by telling other girls. Anyhow, let's keep going. What do you do if you engage someone and they just don't care? Let's look at Matthew 18. Starting in verse 15, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone." Which means you don't have the surprise intervention at home group. You don't all get together as a home group and talk about how someone's issues are really causing a problem and then when they show up at home group, "Surprise! Guess what the topic is tonight. Your sin." No, you go one on one. "If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses." Don't manipulate this process. What He just said here is not, "Go and get two or three people who agree with you and have only heard your side and then sit down with him." It says to take two or three out of the community that you run with and sit down together and engage again. Now what happens at that point if the person still doesn't care? "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." Let me explain that. He's not saying that we ostracize him or shun him. If you've ever studied the Amish, they uncovenant people. They practically like, "You're dead to me." We're not talking about that. You treat them as a tax collector or a gentile, which means you plead with them to repent and join the family.

The thing that troubles me the most about these text is this is a far cry from what Christianity is in Dallas. Here's what we've done. We've created a really beautiful ecclesiological buffet. Several years ago, my wife and I went on a cruise. They laid out buffets that were so pretty that they let you come and take pictures before they opened them. That's what I'm talking about here. And so what ends up happening is most Christians in Dallas go to church but do not belong to one at all. And so they go, "Oh, I like the preaching here. The preacher's amazing. And over here the music's amazing. Is that a laser? Is that snow?..." And we get all geeked out about the presentation. "It's a pastor I can listen to...It's the

style of music that I really like..." And then we pick that church because we like the services, but we never belong to it at all. And when that's what church is to you, it has no power and no vitality giving strength; it's just where you go on the weekends. And that's where you get really ignorant, foolish dumb stuff happening like "Business is business and church is church." And so we miss out on iron sharpening iron. We miss out on the community of faith guarding against the great temptations that are coming for all of us. So I've never really been able understand it, because in the end you can't be growing spiritually like you could be if you were actually plugged in to Christian community. Natalie already told us earlier on the video that our faith was meant to be personal but never private. If you privatize your faith, if you Americanize it, you will never walk in what Christ died to bring you in regards to this family. And then even here at the Village this is very difficult at the size we're at. So some of you are going to have to be proactive about this. You're going to have to sit down with men you know, women you know and you're going to have to say, "I want to just right here give you permission to speak into my life." And then you're going to have the grace to actually take it when, and it is coming. I have never been rebuked where I was like, "That was nice. That was great. Earlier today I was like, 'You know what I could use right now? A good chiseling.'" I almost always instantly think about their failures as somehow their failures negate what they're saying.

So this is difficult stuff. In fact, look how difficult it is. Go back to Luke and look at the response of the disciples immediately after Jesus says all this. "The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Here's what they just said, "You're going to have to help me with that." Now look how He responds. "And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you." The faith that He is referencing is faith in Isaiah 53. If you would have faith that the cross of Christ has paid the bill, if you would have faith that forgiveness is not based on the other person's merit but rather in the cross of Jesus Christ, if you would have the faith to forgive, to lay people at the feet of Christ, if you would have the courage to engage one another as well as be engaged, then powerful things can occur, powerful things like you uprooting a tree (which is unbelievably significant in this culture) and throwing it into the ocean.

And then He wraps up this whole thing with this parable. "Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'" Let me tell you what Jesus is prepping for here. Jesus is always lining you up with how things are. Let me say it this way. This works. So what He's saying is when God starts healing, when God starts strengthening, when you start growing, don't you dare get arrogant, haughty and proud and begin to walk with a swagger. It was Him and Him alone who accomplished these things in the cross. If anything, you've simply been obedient to what Christ enabled you to do, and even your obedience is owned by Him. Which is what you see in Hebrews 6 when the Scriptures say, "Let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity. . . And this we will do if God permits."

Can we do this? And I'm not talking to all of you. Some of you are just not ready for this. Like I said, this is just an ecclesiological buffet for you; you have no idea of what church even is. Church is songs and sermons to you. But that's not church. Church is a group of men and women walking together, coveting with one another to do life together for the glory of God and for the sanctification of their souls in the fullness of Him. And that involves communion, it involves worship, it involves discipline at times and it involves rebuke, both the receiving and the giving. I have this great fear that so many of you are walking around bitter and angry. Someone's harmed you and you've just never said anything. They don't even know that they've harmed you or maybe they do know. But you're playing that game right now where you avoid them and every time you see them you get more angry. Do you realize that the Bible says bitterness grows like a root that grows down into your soul and in the end, not only will it destroy you but it will destroy everybody around you.

That's why this thing's so serious. And that's why the church is this real impotent joke in culture, because we have no counterculture. We do the same thing as the world does, but we just put Jesus' name around it. We're to live completely different in regards to loving one another, in regards to money, in regards to power and in regards to sex. That's countercultural. God help us, huh?

My prayer is that when all is said and done here, the covenant community, those who are members here, those who belong here, that this might be who we are and that love would be the driving force behind that. Let's pray, "Holy Spirit help us. We need Your help. Some of this is really complicated. Some of our hurts are really complicated. The relationship with some of the people that hurt us is really complicated. I pray for Your help in how we relate to one another. I pray for Your help in how we pursue our faith. So many of us pursue our faith in this kind of entrepreneurial bravado where on our own we're trying to overcome cyclical sin, where we are trying to overcome hardship, we're trying to make ourselves as holy as possible, and I just pray that there would be a repenting of even that in this place. Deepen us. We need you. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

© 2008 The Village Church