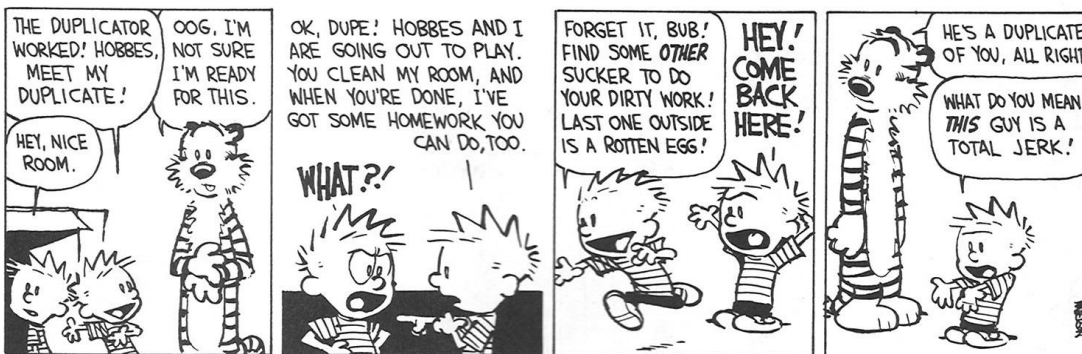


A Perfect Substitute

- Have you ever had a time when you wished you had a substitute?...someone who could stand in your place and do the things you really don't want to do?...
 1. So if you knew there was going to be a difficult meeting at work – no problem – just send your substitute...
 2. Or you really wanted to play golf the next day – no sweat – send the substitute to work and you go play golf...
- now, if you say – where'd you come up with this idea?...
- I really like the cartoon Calvin and Hobbes...(does Calvinist mean something else?)...
- in one particular series, Calvin invented a duplicator, and of course he immediately duplicated himself...here's what happened...



- Things got really complicated when Calvin's substitute met his mom...



- then the duplicate goes into Calvin's machine and makes 4 more copies...so now there are 6 Calvins...



- so now the plot thickens---because sure, it would be nice to have a substitute—but it would really be something if you had a substitute who didn't make the same mistakes you did or worse... so what we really need is a **superior substitute**...that is a tall order...
- which brings us to Isaiah chapter 53...
 - there are four passages in the OT book of Isaiah that speak about the coming Messiah...all of which have the common emphasis that the Messiah will be a perfect servant...
 - **Isaiah 42 – The Perfection of the Servant's Purpose**
 - **Isaiah 49 – The Perfection of the Servant's Mission**
 - **Isaiah 50 – The Perfection of the Servant's Trust**
 - **Isaiah 53 – The Perfection of the Servant's Substitutionary Work**
- read **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**
- please think with me now about **3 characteristics of Christ's substitutionary work**...with special focus on how that should impact the way you and I live today...

I. He Was An Unlikely Substitute.

- God predicted that...

A. This message would be hard to believe.

- **v. 1 – Who has believed our message?**
- God made it clear at the very beginning that many aspects of His Son's coming would make little sense to modern man...
- and we know historically that that's true...
- **John 1:11 - He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.**
 - that's exactly what God said would happen...
 - so much about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ was the opposite of what we would have expected...
 - when you step back – that shouldn't surprise us...2 chapters later God is going to say...
- **Isaiah 55:8-9 - For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.**

- so God said right up front – not everyone is going to believe this message – the Messiah is a substitute, but a very unlikely one...well, why?...

B. He didn't appear to be a king.

1. v. 2 – He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, like a root out of parched ground.

2. v. 2 – He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him.

- well, that certainly came to pass...He was born in a manger...His parents were poor...in His adult ministry He didn't even have a place to lay His head...
- he failed the popularity test, and he failed the appearance test...but what is most pronounced in this prophecy is that...

C. He was despised.

1. v. 3 - He was despised and forsaken of men.

2. v. 3 – He was despised and we did not esteem Him.

- what parent would plan in advance for His Son to be unpopular, and unattractive, and to be despised, hated...people would hide their face instead of coming to Him...
- but it's true – Jesus was despised by those around Him...
- He was a substitute all right – but a highly unlikely one...

D. Take aways?

- now, what are some take-aways from that?...

1. The message of Christ is not a man-made message...

- there is no question that these verses are speaking about Jesus Christ...
- even a rudimentary understanding of the NT confirms that fact...
- but we would never say – well, if we assembled a committee of people to design a perfect Messiah, this is about what they would have come up with...not on your life...

2. The message of Christ is not a hastily conceived message.

- what takes your breath away is that these words were spoken 700 years before they occurred...
- if you're here this evening and you've never trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, what are you going to do with verses like this?...
- this is, an one author put it, evidence that demands a verdict...

3. God's servants today often live in a way that is counter-cultural.

- you might think back on all sorts of decisions you made this past year and think – the words I said, the choices I made – make absolutely no sense except for the fact that I was following what God told me in His Word...
- well, you're not the first of God's servants to say that...practically everything about Jesus Christ was different than what the world would have expected...apparently God is pleased when His children operate on a different value system than the world around us...

- this passage also tells us that...

II. He Is An Effective Substitute.

- that's the key thrust...

A. He died in our place.

1. v. 4 – Surely our griefs He himself bore.

2. v. 4 – and our sorrows He carried

3. v. 5 – He was pierced through for our transgressions
4. v. 5 – He was crushed for our iniquities
5. v. 5 – The chastening for our well-being fell on Him
6. v. 5 – And by His scourging we are healed
7. v. 6 – The Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.
8. v. 8 – He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due.
9. v. 10 – If He would render himself a guilt offering
10. v. 11 – My servant will justify the many as He will bear their iniquities

- one of the most important things God had to say to you about His coming Son is that He was an effective substitute because He was willing to die in your place...

- you know, normally when we think of a substitute...we don't also think of the word effective...

- do you remember in school – when you had a substitute – what was that like?...

- see, this isn't one of Calvin's substitute's who was just as bad as he was, or a substitute teacher who was not nearly as effective as the person he replaced...

- God said – my son will be a servant – who will die in your place...

B. He did so willingly.

1. v. 7 -- He was oppressed and He was afflicted yet He did not open His mouth.

2. v. 7 -- Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter

3. v. 7 – And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.

C. Take-aways?

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1.. **As a servant, we should be willing to fulfill God's plan for us even when it is hard or distasteful.**

- remember the passage began with the words – behold my servant...consider Him, think about Him...

- some of you are in situations where God's plan for you is hard, just like it was for His Son...

- that's one of the reasons your substitute came, and that's one of the reasons your substitute died...

- **1 Peter 4:1-2 - Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.**

- can I pause at this point and ask you a couple of questions:

1. Have you made ***the substitute, your substitute?***

- many people believe they will enter heaven on the basis of their own righteousness...

- they would say – well, I'm a pretty good person...

- then please answer this question...then why did we need Christmas?...why do we need a substitute?...

- you saw it in this text – the issue of our iniquity...for all have sinned...

- Jesus proved that He was the perfect substitute because His Father miraculously raised Him from the dead...

- but you have a decision to make...have you asked Him to be your substitute?

2. Is there evidence that He's your substitute because of the difference He's made in your life?

III. He Will Be an Exalted Substitute.

A. In the future

1. v. 12 – **Therefore I will allot Him a portion with the great, and he will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death.**

2. **Philippians 2:9-11 - For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

- conclude with a pitch hitter who hits a grand slam