

She came to take our order only after we sat there without water or menus for fifteen minutes. After we gave our order we didn't see her. Found out she never put our order into the kitchen so our food wasn't cooked. When she finally delivered our meal there was no apology. When we asked for some extra things it was like we were causing her pain. After what seemed like a long time, she finally brought the check. It was easy to tell this woman didn't like her job of waiting on other people. We remember the good service at restaurants and we return to those. But we especially remember the terrible service because we'll never go back to those restaurants.

Pride is what makes service hard to offer. Its feeling like I'm better than this or I don't deserve this. To serve takes swallowing all those feelings and putting on the best face and just doing it. Turnover among restaurant servers tells you how hard it is. People get burned out. Not too many people are waitresses or waiters for life. Call center employees are the same. That's not a line of work people normally do for the rest of their working days. But even in our daily lives, even if customer service isn't part of our job description, we still would rather not serve someone else. It would mean I make myself less and make them something more.

Jesus was in a customer service industry. His purpose was to serve. Yet, if anyone had reason to be prideful, reason to boast, or reason to feel superior it was Jesus. But he humbled himself to service. He served those that should have been serving him. And he did it willingly. Centuries before the prophet Isaiah wrote about this servant in the first lesson, the Messiah promised by God. We read and study to find out more about...

**The Suffering Servant serves
Humbled as a payment for sin
Exalted in his victory**

No one in a customer service job has ever had to go through something like this. **"He was despised and rejected by men...we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."** Isaiah offers graphic descriptions of the Servant of the Lord. It was basically torture that this servant would go through. Beaten and bloody he would be the Suffering Servant of the Lord. So hideous is this description its surprising anything good could be said about him.

No parent ever wants their children to suffer. Parents react exactly opposite, trying anything to keep their children from suffering. Not the parent of the Suffering Servant. **"It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer."** The Lord God wanted this to happen; it was his plan, his intention. God was reminding the people that a relationship between the perfect God and sinful people doesn't just happen. Blood has to be shed. Every sacrifice pointed ahead to the one great guilt offering that would satisfy God's demand for justice over sin. The blood of the Suffering Servant had to be shed. This servant was Jesus. He suffers for a purpose. He was humbled as a payment for sin.

If you've ever looked at someone else and wondered when they were going to do something for you, that attitude is sinful. It's a self centered attitude that we almost expect from people. It's viewing people as money makers to support the economy. Figuring out ways to take advantage of the producers. Expecting others will do all the serving. These sinful attitudes are pride, and it's in us. We each have let pride take over. We've accumulated sin in such great numbers that we have no way of getting out from under it.

See things from God's perspective and how the Suffering Servant Jesus serves. God planned this redemption of sinners through Christ. God made the soul of Jesus to carry the guilt of all the world's sins including yours and mine. Jesus literally took the sins you commit on himself. When God looked at Jesus, Jesus was guilty of sin and had to die instead of you or me. **"The Lord makes his life a guilt offering."** In becoming a guilt offering Jesus became our perfect substitute. He took away what separates us from God. He removed it forever and paid with his life. **"He poured out his life unto death."** In giving his life he made the complete payment. The Suffering Servant served by becoming a humbled payment for sin on the cross.

Christ's death changes our status before God. The only one right before God now declares us right with God. Even though we're still sinners on earth, God declares us saints in Christ, perfect in his eyes. Being forgiven completely, we're given the ability and motivation through Christ to follow Christ's example of humble service. Because of Jesus we don't have to go looking for glory. Rather we can humbly serve just as our Suffering Servant served us.

The Suffering Servant's time of suffering did have an end. There was a time when he left that humility behind and was exalted in wonderful perfection. That was part of God's plan too. On the morning of the first day of the week, just three days after Jesus died, the stone was rolled away and the emptiness of the tomb was revealed. Jesus lives! The humility is over, the glory is his. His mission is complete, sinners are saved, and he was and is refreshed. The suffering servant serves now exalted in his victory.

Before Jesus died, even centuries before he lived, the resurrection was in the words of Isaiah. **"He will see his offspring and prolong his days...after the suffering of his soul he will see the light of life and be satisfied...therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong."** Did you hear it? The one who once was dead would live again to see offspring and long days. The one once considered a sinner among sinners now receives the spoils of his service. Forgiveness, life, and salvation are his and his alone to share. Jesus wins the victory for all.

Being exalted sure sounds nice. It's everything we want right now. Looking at the world around us, it's the world that seems to be falling apart. Our bodies experience sickness and disease, relationships go bad because of misunderstandings and foul words, and life is hard. Exaltation sounds pretty nice. We want good things now, because, well why wait? Our pride even thinks we deserve good because we're good. We refuse to recognize the path our Suffering Servant took. We think only of Jesus' victory, only his exaltation, never his humiliation and suffering. Or we think that maybe it's right to carry some burdens. Jesus couldn't have paid for all my sin so I probably have to carry some burden. The expectation is by suffering a little God will see and be pleased. See God, I've accepted responsibility for my sin, I'm carrying some burden, there's some sacrifice I can make.

First Jesus suffered, then Jesus was exalted. No one is exalted if they don't suffer first. **"He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."** Jesus bore the weight of our sin, the entire weight. He had to face the rejection of God and go through death so he could come out the other side into life eternal. Glory waited for him on the other side of death. It wasn't just glory for him though. By the perfect Savior experiencing death and being raised again we too will experience the same thing. Jesus made intercession for us. Jesus paid with his life and gave God the compensation he was looking for in regards to sin, our sin. Jesus bore those sins and now declares the victory.

To know Christ is to know his blessings, the promises which through the gospel he has scattered throughout the world. To know those blessings, in a proper and true sense, is to believe in Christ, to believe that God will keep the promises which he makes on account of Christ. Victory is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord. It's victory over sin and death, victory over the devil and his temptations, victory that can't ever be taken away. It's victory that changes our lives now because no longer are we stuck looking only at this sinful world. Victory in Christ allows us vision to see beyond this suffering and sin to a life waiting for us in heaven. That's the portion Christ our Savior won for us as the Suffering Servant who serves and is exalted in his victory.

We might have a memory only for the bad experiences when we've been served. It's important for us to remember the service we received from the Suffering Servant. He humbled himself to become a payment for sin on the cross for us. He was then exalted in his victory over sin, death, and Satan. He makes it so that we share with him in that humble service and exalted victory. Because of that we serve in the same way our Suffering Servant Christ served us.