

Jesus - The Man of Sorrows

Key Message: Jesus is deeply acquainted with grief and suffering - He is not a distant observer

Exodus 3:7

ESV:

Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. **I know their sufferings,**

NIV:

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and **I am concerned about their suffering.**

One of our biggest struggles in life is with **suffering** and **sorrow**. Where is God in the midst of it? Is He even aware of it? Why does He allow it? We have been conditioned as charismatics to expect that all shall be well as long as we pray and trust God, so we struggle to understand why bad things happen.

Sometimes when we face these questions we may even conclude that perhaps it's because of our sin and so we deserve the suffering we are enduring. **But then what about Jesus?** He was completely innocent and yet suffered? Why?

One of the most misunderstood things about Jesus is why he came down to earth as a man. I've often heard people trying to ponder this question of why Jesus had to become flesh and blood like us. The answer is as deep and multifaceted as it is beautiful. At least one dimension of that answer is that Jesus came to earth as a man **so that he could model to us how we should persist and prevail through trial and to comfort us in the midst of it.**

It's quite extraordinary when you think that Jesus went through suffering and struggles. Why would he when he is the son of God, the Messiah? Theologically, we may understand why it is that in order to bear the sins of man, Jesus had to be a man himself and so the cross was necessary, but why couldn't the rest of his life be good? Perhaps it was so that we could be encouraged in our trials and struggles. That we could look at the one who went before us and suffered despite there not being an ounce of sin within Him, nothing within him that could be pointed to as a reason for why he should undergo this suffering. And yet he emerges through it all, victorious. He triumphed so that we can triumph.

The Suffering Servant

One of the names given to Jesus is that of the **man of sorrows**. We see this in Isaiah 53, a deeply prophetic passage about the Messiah.

Isaiah 53:3-4a ESV

He was **despised and rejected** by men,
a **man of sorrows** and **acquainted with grief**;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he has **borne** our **griefs**
and carried our **sorrows**;

English: *Hebrew*

sorrows: *mah-KOHV (מַכָּאֵב)*

*embraces the ideas of **bodily pain**, **emotional grief**, and **spiritual anguish**. Scripture employs the noun for both physical affliction (Job 33:19) and inner sorrow (Psalm 32:10), **allowing a single word to portray the entire spectrum of human suffering**.*

grief: *kho-lee' (חֶלִי)*

*The noun חֶלִי denotes **bodily sickness or disease**, yet its scriptural breadth reaches into covenant theology, royal narratives, wisdom reflection, prophetic indictment, and messianic hope.*

borne: *sah-BAHL (סָבַל)*

*The verb סָבַל portrays the action of carrying a weight—whether literal loads, imposed labor, or the inward weight of affliction. The idea is never casual transport; it conveys strenuous effort, a **shoulder bowed to strain**, or a soul pressed down.*

1 Peter 2:18–25 directly quotes and applies Isaiah 53 to Christ's suffering:

1 Peter 2:20b-24 ESV

But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, **because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps**. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, **but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly**. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Let us walk through some moments in Jesus' life to illustrate just how much pain this **Suffering Servant** underwent, and **how through His pain and suffering, you and I can find our deepest comfort**.

Charles Spurgeon:

"There is no remedy for sorrow beneath the sun like the sorrows of Immanuel. As Aaron's rod swallowed up all the other rods, so the griefs of Jesus make our griefs disappear."

1. Despised and rejected

1.1. His Lineage

Jesus was born into a lineage that is full of sin and suffering. In this genealogy (Mt 1), Matthew is at pains to highlight very specific members of the lineage leading to Jesus. The likes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the sons of Jacob, Judah/Tamar, Rahab, David, Bathsheba, Solomon. Many of these are **known almost synonymously with their sin**.

Yet it is into this line that Jesus is born, according to the Word of Promise. Not only that, but he wasn't literally born into it, he was actually **adopted** into it. He is truly the son of God. His father Joseph was only an adoptive father.

Jesus is adopted into the human line, the same sinful human race that is in desperate need of God, and so He enters that line and all the pain, suffering and trouble that comes with it. He does so in obedience to His Father.

And what is the end result? The end result is that you and I, even if we be orphaned in this world, even if we feel like outcasts, rejects due to sin, even if we feel like we carry the weight of generations of sin on our backs - we have someone who has gone before us and has instead adopted us out of the line of sin and into a new line, His line. **We have become children of God.**

Jesus was also born into a situation where people would have thought Mary was unfaithful. Her and Joseph were betrothed but before they came together, she was with child through the Holy Spirit. Of course, other people would treat them with contempt and regard him as though he were an illegitimate boy.

Imagine the other kids, having picked up what their parents said about them. They would have always had it in mind that this child was born out of wedlock and therefore is of lesser worth.

From the very moment Jesus enters this world He already enters into a state of despair, of sorrows. A state with contempt at every corner. Jesus was rejected even before he could defend himself.

So too, you and I, when walking paths of rejection and contempt because of who we are or what we have done - we have one who went before us and bore those same sorrows, but was firm in His identity and in His knowledge of who His Father is. He is our Father too.

1.2. His Hometown

Jesus was frequently rejected and treated with disdain. The first case we see of this was when he went to his hometown Nazareth early in his ministry. He went into the synagogue and read from Isaiah 61, a prophetic passage referring to Himself as being the one to set the captives free. The response was initially receptive, but then someone said “*Isn’t this Joseph’s son?*”, and in Matthew it says “*they took offense at him*”. This led to Jesus rebuking them for their unbelief.

[Luke 4:28-29 ESV](#)

When they heard these things, all in the synagogue **were filled with wrath**. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.

The people were in such radical opposition to him that they wanted to kill him. The same townspeople who knew him as a kid. And perhaps, had it not been his appointed mission to die on the cross for us, they probably would have. This is rejection on the worst level - how much more violently can you reject someone than by killing them?

1.3. His Family

Then we see that even his own family had contempt for him and didn’t believe him. Jesus had a number of brothers and sisters, many of whom clearly rejected who he was, because in John 7 we read “*For not even his brothers believed in him.*”

After He had selected his 12 apostles, they went home to eat, but because the crowds followed Him wherever He went, they couldn’t get a moment’s rest. Check his family’s response:

[Mark 3:20-21 ESV](#)

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “**He is out of his mind.**”

1.4. His Disciples

Perhaps the worst abandonment of them all came from his disciples. Throughout his ministry Jesus had many so-called disciples, but not all of these believed in Him.

[John 6:62-66 ESV](#)

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. **But there are some of you who do not believe.**” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.” **After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.**

Of course following this, the 12 affirmed their belief in Him, but eventually they all did indeed abandon him in the Garden. When the Pharisees and the guards came to arrest him, they all fled out of fear.

Jesus was laughed at for raising the dead, told he was casting out demons by the prince of demons, had his credentials questioned at every opportunity, called a rebel and a blasphemer. His neighbours, his family, even many of his disciples abandoned him. When the Word of God says “he was despised and rejected by men”, it was on a scale we couldn’t even imagine.

He who was “despised and rejected of men” was yet beloved and adored by angels.

2. A man of sorrows

2.1. Poverty

Jesus was born into a poor family (the offering given for him was two pigeons or turtledoves - see Lev 12:6-8), grew up in a poor town and was the son of a carpenter. Once he began his ministry he no longer had a reliable income and would've been entirely dependent on the donations or contributions of those around him, his followers. Is this a comfortable or secure economic position? How does this compare to your particular situation today?

Jesus experienced the trials of poverty. He would have gone through his life without being in a position of ease economically, and yet, there is no record of him ever complaining about it. There is no time where he seemed to be distressed about it either. But undoubtedly, he would know the pains of it. **He would understand hunger, thirst and lack.**

There is great encouragement in knowing that when we are poor, when we are struggling to make ends meet, we don't just bring our plea to the owner of all things, but we also bring our pleas through the one **who knows the sorrows of poverty as one who lived through it himself**. And do we not think that He would be earnest in his cries to his Father on our behalf, recalling the beautiful promises He had made to his disciples.

2.2. Weariness

Jesus literally had a travelling ministry. It involved moving from town to town on foot or sometimes on a boat, but often travelling miles at a time. He would remain in a place just a few days before moving on, such was the urgency of his message. Throughout this ministry he was pursued relentlessly by those who sought his help, so he had precious little rest. Jesus also surely had such minimal amounts of sleep during his ministry, because he would still wake up before the sun had risen and go out to pray.

It goes absolutely without saying that Jesus would be **weary**. Recall on the one trip across the sea, when the storm rose up and the disciples thought they would perish - Jesus was asleep in the boat!

If you are drained, weary and exhausted, remember that Jesus knows this pain intimately. He knows the aching joints, the tired eyes, the weary legs. We draw comfort that when we ask for refreshment from the one who supplies streams of living water, He generously gives.

2.3. Temptation

We often think of Jesus' temptations as being somewhat different from what you and I could experience. Or we believe that because Jesus is God, He couldn't sin anyway so temptations had no real effect on him.

But consider this - Jesus had to become a man so that He could overcome **the same struggles you and I have**, and yet emerge innocent and without sin. As a man, Jesus was not walking in the fullness of his glory, even if he technically carried it all along. Even if He had the power to completely disregard sin, as a man of flesh, He would have to face the same temptations we do and overcome them by the power of the Spirit, who was upon him, just as he is available to us.

Hebrews 4:15 (ESV)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who **in every respect** has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 2:18 (ESV)

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

So just as you and I are tempted by the enemy, we have one who was **tempted in all ways just as we are, yet emerged victorious**. He is our champion, He is our encouragement. If He stood strong, it was to show us that we can too. If this is your struggle today, look to Jesus as your liberator. When you pray, recall his victory and ask that He allows you too to walk in it fully through His Spirit.

3. Acquainted with grief

3.1. Walking close to death

When Jesus was born, there was already someone seeking to end his life. Herod was already on his case, desperately seeking him to kill him. Understand that yes, this was an insecure human king, but the one pulling his strings would certainly have been the devil himself. He was aware of who Jesus was and wanted to stop him.

So too we have enemies who seek our downfall. Not humans, mind you (even if there are any), but the spiritual forces of wickedness. The enemy and his agents are always seeking ways to

put us to death. Always on the prowl, trying to end us and put an end to all that we might have done in this world for the sake of the kingdom of God and for our fellow man. The devil doesn't seem to have received the message that **not even death itself can separate us from the love of Christ**.

Let us take courage that the Father preserves His people. For Jesus and his parents, even if it led them to a foreign land in Egypt and to be immigrants (yet another source of contempt), still, he preserved his son. So too, He preserves you and me.

3.2. Death

Jesus wasn't a stranger to death. One of the bits you can decipher by reading between the lines of scripture is that **Joseph**, Jesus' earthly father, most likely died before he began his ministry. The last mention of him is the account in Luke when Jesus is 12 years old and remains behind in Jerusalem after Passover. By the time the wedding celebration in Cana comes around, Joseph is conspicuous in his absence. Given that this was a man called righteous, a man who followed God's instruction obediently, it is likely that he passed away rather than divorced Mary. This would be a loss for Jesus, surely and add to the weight on his shoulders as the eldest son.

Then there was his cousin - **John the Baptist**, who was imprisoned by Herod and ultimately beheaded. This was another deep grief for Jesus, this is the man who was called the greatest of all men born of women, the one who prepared the way for Him, the one who baptised Him.

Then there was his good friend, **Lazarus**. We read in John 11 that when they tell Jesus that his friend is sick, they say "*Lord, the one you love is sick.*" When Lazarus does eventually die and Jesus sees the grief of those around Him including Mary and Martha, he too weeps. Is it safe to say that Jesus experienced grief through death and loss?

We too can take great comfort that the Lord has deep compassion on us and is close to us when we mourn. This isn't just His promise, but it's something you can rest assured he has actual lived experience of. "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*"

3.3. Watching people choose death and judgment

Jesus was possibly even **the most** sorrowful of men. Not because of his own sorrows, but because of His purity. His complete absence of sin. Because of His holiness, the experience of being amongst sin must've been **deeply grievous to Him**.

Think about when you see someone living in abject sin, having no regard for human life, for law, order, for anything at all. How does it make you feel? You either feel deep disgust or else you feel immense pain. It hurts you to see the unrighteousness of an evil man on full display. We, as fallen men and women ourselves, yet feel such agony about the sinfulness of fellow men. Imagine what this is like for someone who has never sinned, who is pure perfection and holiness.

For Jesus to see men and women choosing their own will, their own way, their own lordship, rather than the Lordship of Yahweh, it must have grieved his heart beyond measure. To choose pride rather than humility, death rather than life, freely offered.

Matthew 23:37 ESV

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!

As in Hosea, imagine what it is like to see your bride going astray. Your bride loving all manner of other things and people. Your bride indulging in sensuality and shunning you. This must have been the worst suffering of them all for the Lord. He had to walk amongst His people, His precious ones, the ones He loved, and all the while He was rejected and his love was shunned.

This is one suffering we cannot say that we share in. Jesus has already shown His unending love for us in the most vivid way by giving His very life for us. He took our place. He bore our sin. Bless Him for it, because we were the unfaithful ones, yet He welcomed us back to Him and loves us just the same.

4. Silence

Do you ever consider the fact that Jesus was **never rescued from his sufferings**? He wasn't swept up in angels' arms to heaven if the suffering grew too much. Just like we aren't often swept up from our challenges.

Matthew 26:36;39 NIV

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “**My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.** Stay here and keep watch with me.” Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “**My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.**”

When we think about what is so frightful about hell, we begin by focusing on the torment, but the reality of what is so terrible about it is the **separation from God**. The feeling of having any connection with Him being cut off forever. Now imagine those moments on the cross, when Jesus cried out to his Father and bore the weight of generations of sin (past, present and future) upon his shoulders. That wasn't the only reason for his sorrow. He willingly undertook the cross - in fact for the joy set before Him He forged ahead. The sorrow stemmed from that moment of enduring not the sin that was ours, but **the wrath of God that was ours**. At that moment, He saw the weight of our judgment and grieved that there be not another way to satisfy it.

Imagine having the armies of heaven at his disposal yet **submitting to men** in accordance with God's will. The Father could've sent the host of heaven to lift his Son off that cross, but instead there was silence. But the silence was brief, just long enough for him to reach into the depths of the grave and defeat death and lay hold of the keys to Hades.

Jesus Christ, the suffering servant suffered until the very end. Yet, it was about Him that His Father said "With you I am well pleased".

Jesus was a man of sorrows but he was not a sorrowful man. **For the joy set before him**, he undertook the worst of sufferings. That joy would've actually made him the most joyous of men, because He could see the long-awaited redemption of mankind.

Close

Jesus suffered greatly during His lifetime. He suffered as a man, just like you and me. It had to be as a man, or else he could never have been able to claim to know our struggles. Yet, He faced them all.

You and I suffer all manner of agony in this world. This is not unique to us as Christians, it is the portion of mankind. But every single time, every single time - Jesus is right there with us in the torment, in the pain, in the abandonment, in the tears, in the loss, in the mourning - not because He pretends to know what we are going through, **but because He lived it himself**. And more than that, He remains at our side, constantly lifting our weary souls.

The blessed day is coming, when a loud voice from the throne of heaven will cry:

Revelation 21:3-4 ESV

"Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.**"

"Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

A picture of heaven!