

The Substitute

Scripture Reading — Isaiah 53:1-6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray ... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
Isaiah 53:6 —

You can hear the confusion around the cross in the words of Gandhi: “I could accept Jesus as a martyr... His death on the cross was a great example to the world, but that there was anything like a mysterious or miraculous virtue in it, my heart could not accept.”

Often those who do not believe in Jesus are confused about the power of the cross, because they don't accept the idea of substitution. The same is true of people who claim to believe but say the death of Jesus sounds like “divine child abuse.” But Isaiah had said substitution would be part of the ministry of this Servant. And on the cross the Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. Jesus was our substitute.

Why do we need a substitute? Imagine that your teenager uses your car and swerves off your driveway, smashing into a tree. He's fine, but there's a lot of damage to the car. For reasons you cannot fathom, your insurance won't cover the damage. What can you do? You can demand that your child pay the damages, or you can pay for them yourself. The fact is that the damage doesn't somehow vanish into thin air. Someone has to pay.

On the cross God paid the damages caused in this world by our sin. We had swerved off the road, gone astray like sheep, and the Lord laid our debt on our Substitute by sending him to the place of ultimate damage. What amazing love!

Prayer

Lord Jesus, “love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” I offer it to you. Amen.

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