

Four Lenten Studies

"The Servant"

by
Rev. Dr Nick Hawkes

Leading the four Lenten Studies

THANK YOU

Thank you for being a small group leader for this Lenten series.

THE GROUP LEADER

The leader should be a facilitator. This means that he/she should make it possible for things to be organised and happen. The leader should not necessarily do everything but should delegate responsibility. It is particularly a good idea for the leader not to be personally responsible for the domestic arrangements but to give this responsibility to an assistant.

PROMOTE DISCUSSION

The leader's main job in the group discussion time is to get people talking. It is not to provide all the answers. A leader's skill is in making people feel at ease, appreciated and in gently drawing people into discussion. Leaders need to treat all questions seriously and with respect so that people will be encouraged to share because no question or opinion is considered too stupid or antagonistic to be appreciated.

The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out. (Proverbs 20:5)

PREPARING THE VENUE

A venue should be comfortable and non-threatening. Chairs should usually be placed in a circle for discussion. Avoid having chairs behind each other if possible as it encourages those sitting in them to be less involved.

Some people also take the phone off the hook or switch them off to avoid distractions.

THE FIRST MEETING

People will come to the first meeting with some apprehension, particularly if they are unfamiliar with Christianity or church. They will also bring with them all sorts of fears and preconceptions of what Christianity and church are about. The first meeting is the ideal time to shatter people's negative preconceptions and put them at their ease. For this reason, ensure the venue is welcoming and looks good. Consider using soft indirect lighting and having background music as people arrive. Surprise people with excellence and how "normal" things are.

BREAKING THE ICE

Warm up activities at the start of a home group meeting can be anything that will help people relax, smile and get to know each other. It can be as basic as a chat over a cup of coffee.

WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE BRING?

Ask people to bring their Bibles (provide some for those who may not have one).

TIMELINESS

There is no spiritual merit in meetings being long drawn out marathons. People will tire of them if they are. Be disciplined with time and let people go home at a civilised hour.

Before people go home, the meeting should have a definite ending e.g. a concluding prayer.

PRAYER

All prayers prayed by leaders before or after a meeting should be simple, sincere, relevant to what has been discussed and short. Such prayers will not intimidate people and will encourage them to believe that they too might soon be able to pray in such a way.

DOING THE STUDIES

Encourage members of the group to take turns in reading the readings out loud to the group (checking with them first privately that they are willing and able to do so).

Be familiar with the teaching sections so that you don't necessarily have to read them verbatim but can paraphrase them easily in your own words.

God bless your ministry
Nick Hawkes

Notes on Isaiah's Servant Songs

On four occasions in the writings of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, the prophet's language changes and becomes almost surreal. On each of these occasions, the prophet speaks of God's "servant". When we read these sections, we know we are dealing with prophecy.

There is some debate as to who the servant is, as the identity of the servant seems fluid. Sometimes it suggests Isaiah, sometimes another individual¹, sometimes the Jewish nation of Israel and sometimes a future messiah. Perhaps the very indefiniteness of the allusion was God's intention. By keeping the figure vague, the servant does not become an historical curiosity but a clever weaving of individual responsibilities, national responsibilities – all in the context of God's coming messiah.

There is little doubt that the allusions in the servant songs particularly point to God's messiah, Jesus Christ. Much of what is contained in the servant songs are 700 year old prophecies of the coming of Jesus. This has been generally recognised from the earliest days of Christianity. In Acts 8:26-40, we read of an Ethiopian official struggling to understand who the suffering Servant was in Isaiah. He asks, "Of whom does the prophet speak?" Philip, one of the very first church deacons, explains to him that the suffering Servant was Jesus Christ.²

The four sections in Isaiah that speak of the servant are Isaiah 42:1-7; Isaiah 49:1-6; Isaiah 50:4-9; and Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. These have come to be known as the four "Servant Songs of Isaiah" and each of these are the basis of this year's four Lenten studies.

The Servant songs are nail holes in the surface of present reality which allowed God's hyper-reality to shine through and reveal God's future purpose. Marvel at these prophecies and enjoy the insights they give to the ministry of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Dr. Nick Hawkes

¹Israel's prophetic figures were typically called "my servants, the prophets" and "servant of Yahweh." Moses is called this in Deuteronomy. If the servant was a real prophetic figure, Jeremiah is a likely candidate. He was called by God (compare Jeremiah 1:5 and Isaiah 49:5). We know from Kings and the book of Jeremiah that he was socially outcast and physically abused. Other suggestion for the servant include Judah's king in exile, Jehoiachin, Second Isaiah himself, and Zerubbabel, the first governor of Judea after the exile.

²Philip the deacon (called "Philip the evangelist") should not be confused with Philip the apostle (Mk 3:18; Jn 1:43).

1) The First Servant Song: Isaiah 42:1-7

Teach:

There is no doubt that the children of Israel are addressed as God's servant people. They were entrusted by God with bringing the knowledge of God and blessings God gave to Abraham to the rest of the world (Is 41:8; 43:10). Unfortunately, they failed to do this (Is 42:18-20). In fact, they were so disobedient to God that God let them be taken off to exile to Babylon as captives. However, several times in Isaiah, God tells the exiles not to fear as he would send his Servant to accomplish the task they failed to perform.

The first servant song begins by introducing the servant. Two things are evident about this servant. The first is that he is chosen; the second is that he had God's Spirit placed within him (v.1).

Discuss:

What does being chosen mean and what is its significance?

Teach:

We who are Christ's servants, are similarly chosen. In the very first verse of many books in the New Testament, the writer makes it clear that he understands himself to be a "servant of Christ" (Rom 1:1; Tit 1:1; Jude 1; Jas 1:1). However, please understand, Christians are not just servants, they are "chosen" to be servants of Christ.

Read: Eph 1:4-6.

Discuss: What insights does this give you about your identity and worth?

Teach:

Henri Nouwen, the great Christian writer on spirituality and pastoral care, encourages us to cherish the word 'chosen'. He says that if you lose touch with your chosen-ness, you expose yourself to self-rejection.

Ponder for a moment: Do you feel chosen by God or do you tend to reject your God-given value and status? (Allow time to ponder.)

The second thing we learn about the servant is that he has been given God's Spirit, i.e. God's empowering presence, to help him accomplish his ministry.

We, as God's servants today, have similarly been given God's Spirit to empower our ministry. In fact, we cannot do effective ministry without the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit within us. This is why Jesus told his disciples to not engage in any ministry until they had been empowered by God's Holy Spirit. Only then were they ready to be Christ's witnesses locally, regionally and internationally (Acts 1:4-8).

Read: Jn 14:16-17; Jn 14:12; 16:7

Leader's note: Say that these verses speak of Jesus promising to send the Holy Spirit (sometimes called "the Comforter") to us after he left.

Ask: What is it that the Holy Spirit enables all who are God's servants to do?

Leader's notes: Ask different people to look up and read the following – listing the things that the Holy Spirit empowers us to do:

- Acts 1:8
- 1 Cor 2:4
- Mt 12:28
- Acts 4:31
- 1 Cor 12:7-11
- Acts 8:29
- Jn 14:26
- Mt 10:19-20
- Jn 16:8-11

These passages tell us that it was God's intention that all Christians be filled with God's spirit. This first happened during the feast of Pentecost, just after Jesus had ascended to rejoin the Father (Acts 2:1-21).

Teach:

When the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, God made a statement: “*And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; **with you I am well pleased**”* (Mk 1:11). It is significant that the words “**With you I am well pleased**” (or “in whom I delight”) are the very same words found in Is 42:1 which speak of God's Spirit empowering the Servant (Is 52:1). Can you see the link being made again between the Servant of Isaiah and Jesus?

Teach:

Verse 2 says: “***He will not cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.***” The Servant faithfully represents the Master not only in what he does but how he does it. And the Servant of God will not do anything that is showy. He will not cry out or raise his voice. The Servant's way is gentle.

Jesus describes himself as “gentle and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29). He is a person interested in three classes of people: the least, the last and the lost.”³ Jesus came as King but a very special sort of King – a gentle king, a servant King (Phil 2:5-8; Mt 20:26-28 – look these verses up). Selwyn Hughes says: “His will be an upside down kingdom ... Jesus will stoop to conquer, and suffer in order to reign.”⁴

The gentleness of the Servant is further shown by the statement: “***A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out***” (v.3). The Servant has remarkable sensitivity. He handles people like precious china. He seeks to make lives, not break lives.

A bruised reed has been damaged by someone walking on it. A smouldering wick has the flame of life almost extinguished. Both are sacred to God.

Ponder: When have you felt particularly bruised or nearly extinguished?

Read: Mt 9:35-36

Discuss: What do these verses make you feel? What do they teach you?

³Selwyn Hughes & Philip Greenslade, *Every Day with Jesus*, 13th March, 2003, (Farnham, Surrey, U.K.: CWR)

⁴Selwyn Hughes & Philip Greenslade, *Every Day with Jesus*, 7th March, 2003, (Farnham, Surrey, U.K.: CWR)

Note the book written by the Anabaptist sociologist: Donald Kraybill, *The Upside Down Kingdom* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1978).

Teach:

Verse 4 tells us that although the Servant may be gentle, nonetheless: “*He will not falter or be discouraged*” (v.4) This speaks of strength of purpose.

On October 29, 1941, Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, visited Harrow School to speak to the students. The Second World War was raging and things were not looking good. Churchill stood before the students and said, “*Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, give in. Never give in. Never give in. Never give in.*”

Where do you find the strength to keep going? (Allow time to ponder)

This passage teaches us that the Servant will not falter or be discouraged “*until he establishes justice on earth*” (v.4). Justice is Jesus' top priority.

Many of us cry out for Justice.

Discuss: What justice do you cry out for?

Teach:

Verse 5 simply spells out the credentials of the one who calls the Servant into ministry. It is the God who created the heavens who does it. As such, the Servant's ministry is not a self appointed one.

Verse 6 tells us that the servant is called as a righteous person to be engaged in a righteous purpose. This too prefigures Christ, who was both righteous and engaged in the righteous act of purchasing humankind back to God (2 Cor 5:21). Verse 6 goes on to say that the servant will represent a new “*covenant*” between the people and God, and in so doing, will be a “*light for the Gentiles*”, i.e. to the whole world (v.6).

(Read: 1 Cor 11:25; Jn 8:12)

The Servant will come, as Samuel Chadwick says, “to bring all things into line with the character of God, to restore all things to the pattern of the divine mind.”⁵ The Servant will concern himself with healing the blind and releasing those who are in prison or darkness (v.7).

Jesus was to quote the words of this passage (as it is repeated in Isaiah 61:1-2) when he first announced the nature of his mission in Luke's gospel (Lk 4:18). These words are nothing less than the manifesto of the Servant King, Jesus Christ.

Ministry:

Divide into pairs and pray for each other to be empowered afresh by the Holy Spirit so you too can share in the work of the Servant.

⁵Samuel Chadwick was a powerful Methodist revivalist preacher in 19th century England.

2) The Second Servant Song: Isaiah 49:1-6

Teach:

Your birth was no mistake. God has a reason for your existence (Jer 1:5). This means that whilst children may sometimes be unplanned by parents, they are not unplanned by God. He has had you in mind eternally. God stands outside time and so already knows the future. Despite him already knowing what all the imperfections of your life will be, God has not chosen to cancel your existence. God has allowed you to be because he is wooing your love and calling you to share his purpose. This means that our identity and our purpose is not finally determined by our genes or by our parents but by the will of God.

This was the case for the servant in the second servant song in Isaiah. Verse 1 says: "**Before I was born the Lord called me**". The servant shouts it out to "**islands**" and "**distant lands**". He wants the whole world to know that his life and mission were purposed by God.

Question: (ponder this in a brief time of quiet)

Do you also, as a servant of God, understand that your life is purposed by God?

Teach:

It is not enough to know you are purposed if you don't know what that purpose is. This passage makes clear that the servant knows exactly what his purpose is. In verse 2, we read: "**He made my mouth like a sharpened sword**". The servant sees himself as God's mouthpiece. He knows that he is called to speak the word of God to people.

Discuss:

Divide up into pairs and share with each other what you suspect God's purpose is for your life. Avoid generalities and try and be as specific as possible.

Read: Heb 4:12

Discuss:

- What insights about the power and quality of God's word does this passage teach you?
- What evidence do we have that the words of Jesus showed this quality?
- How have you experience the word of God being like a "sharpened sword"?

Leader's note: The servant was going to be a speaker of God's word, a word that was going to cut through to the real issue with devastating power and effectiveness. Examples of Jesus doing this can be read in Mt 7:28-29; 23:1-39; Mk 12:28-34

Teach:

Listen to how the servant describes God preparing him and nurturing him for this ministry. We read that he is hidden "**in the shadow of (God's) hand**" where he is:

- 1) polished
- 2) concealed (v.2).

It is as if God has him hidden in his hand ready to be revealed and set to work at the right time. Until that time, he polishes him like an arrow. All bumps and imperfections are polished away so you will fly true to your intended target.

That's what God wants to do for you. He wants to polish you and prepare you for your intended ministry. There can be no ministry without refining and preparation.

The Servant was willing to wait patiently and accept God's timing.

Read: Ex 2:11-15; 4:10-15; 7:7

Discuss:

1) What do you learn from these passages about being prepared for mission?

Leader's notes: Moses began life a spoilt young prince who tried to take the law into his own hands and do things his own way without any reference to God (Ex 2:11-15). When he first encountered God, he was initially reluctant to do God's will (Ex 4:10-15). It was not until he was eighty years old that he was ready to obey God and fulfill his main life's purpose (Ex 7:7).

2) It often seems to be the case that we need to wait for the right time before God sets us loose on a particular type of ministry. We need to submit to God's timing. What sort of refining and preparation have you experienced from God's hand?

Teach:

Verse 3 says: "***He said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendour'***". It can certainly be said that Jesus displayed God's splendour. In fact, Jesus said that if anyone had seen him, they had seen the Father (Jn 14:9). Any servant of God will showcase God's glory.

However, what follows are the all-too-human doubts and discouragements. The servant says: "***I have laboured to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing***" (v.4). Do you ever feel like that? Lord, my ministry situation is useless. I've failed. I haven't achieved my purpose.

Questions:

Divide people into pairs and ask them to discuss:

- When did you most feel like this?
- Have you recovered? If so, what happened to help you recover. If not, what help do you need to help you recover?

Teach:

The servant wrestles with his own sense of confusion and weariness and searches deep within himself for the meaning of what he is doing. Then, by an effort of will, he reconnects with God's perspective.

Servants get tired. Even Jesus got weary (Jn 4:6).⁶ But although we do get tired in service, we must never tire of service.

The servant then pulls himself together and acknowledges the truth of the fact that it is not his judgement of his ministry that matters, but it is God's judgement that matters. He understands that his reward "***is in the Lord's hand***" (v.4).

⁶When Jesus was weary and waited outside a village well in Samaria.

God's response to this struggling servant of God is beautiful. The Lord addresses him with a long introductory sentence which describes the true significance of the servant in God's eyes. The Lord says to the one "*who was formed in the womb to be his servant*", whose job it was to bring the Jewish people back to God (to "*gather Israel back to himself*"); the Lord says to the one who is "*honoured in the eyes of the Lord*" to the one who has given the servant "*strength*" (v.5).

Discuss: Look at verse 6.

- What is it that God says to the servant?
- What do you learn from this?

Summarise and conclude:

God essentially says in verse 6, "I have reviewed my purpose for your life and ministry. I think you should no longer just be responsible for bringing the Jewish people back to me. I want your ministry to be bigger. I want you to go to the non Jews as well, (the Gentiles). I now call you to bring my message of salvation"*to the ends of the earth*" (v.6).

There is no room for small mindedness when it comes to the things of God.

Do you now appreciate that what you call a failure may be the same thing that persuades God to promote your ministry to a whole new level of significance?

3) The Third Servant Song: Isaiah 50:4-9

Teach:

Verse 4 begins: “*The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue to know the word that sustains the weary*”. The picture is a beautiful one. God gives his servant words of comfort and encouragement to give to those wearied by difficulty and oppression.

The Servant has an “instructed tongue”, instructed by God. We too, as Gods' servants, are not to speak from our own authority. We have no mandate as God's servants to say anything other than the words God gives us to speak. Even Jesus did not speak of his own accord but spoke only that which his Father gave him to say (Jn 12:49).

Weariness is a reality, but God's servants have the God-given ability to sustain the weary. God has a concern for the “weary”. This is shown by Jesus' invitation for the weary to come to him.

Read: Mt 11:27-30

- Who is this invitation for in today's terms? Give examples?
- What is the yoke of Jesus?
- What credentials does Jesus give in this invitation and why are they important?

Teach:

No one can be a faithful servant unless they choose to hear the request of their master. In verse 5 we read: “*The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious*”. This reminds us that two things are required in order to serve God:

- 1) to hear God's word (Remember how the boy Samuel said to God, “Speak, for your servant is listening [1 Sam 3:9-10])
- 2) to then be obedient and do it.

The servant did not compromise in his obedience to God, even in the face of opposition. He could honestly say, “*I have not drawn back*” (v.5). He remained faithful even though he was being flogged and abused. “*I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard*” (v.6).

Jesus, too, was faithful when he was beaten (Mk 14:65 read it out).

It is sobering to know that we too must expect to be persecuted for our faith.

Read: Jn 15:20; 1 Thess 3:2-4; Mk 8:34

Discuss: What is your reaction to these passages?

Read: Mt 5:11-12; Jas 1:2-4

Discuss:

- What do you learn from these passages?
- Look again at the Isaiah passage and see if you can find in it three convictions which helped the Servant remain faithful in the face of persecution.

Leader's notes: The three convictions that helped the Servant bear his persecution were 1) understanding that the Lord would help him (v.7); 2) having an eternal perspective that helped him understand that he would be eventually vindicated by God; 3) he understood that God always remained close to him in all his trials: “*He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me?*” (v.8).

Teach:

The Servant is certain that God will vindicate him and he knows that he will "***not be disgraced***" (v 7). Having these convictions enabled the Servant to say: "***I have set my face like flint***" (v.7). He is a determined man.

We are reminded in Lk 9:51 that "Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" where he knew he would die in fulfilling God's purpose (Lk 9:51). He set his face like flint.

The Servant is determined to finish the work God has given him. He shares this passion with the Apostle Paul. Paul's passion was to finish well. He often spoke of this desire in terms of finishing "the race" (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 4:7).

Read: 1 Cor 9:24-27

Discussion:

- What strict training do you do (or should you do) in order to finish well?
- Paul speaking of beating his body is a figurative term for what? What does it mean and what is its relevance for us today?
- What personal victories do you know of which were only made possible by sheer determination?

Teach:

Lastly, the Servant issues a warning. Those who do not walk in the light of the one true God will "***lie down in torment***" (Isa 50:10-11). This highlights the fact that what the Servant brings is good for people. It will rescue them from the torment of knowing that they have been wrong in living their lives without God.

Similarly, as servants of God, what we say should be good for people. Our words should rescue people into truth and meaning.

Proverbs 25:11 reminds us to speak pure "gold" but to make sure we set it in "settings of silver". In other words, it is not only important to have pure gold to say, we must present it in a way that is beautiful, i.e. solid silver. The Apostle Peter also tells us to be ready to share our faith at all times, but to do this with "*gentleness and respect*" (1 Pet 3:16).

4) The Fourth Servant Song: Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

Teach:

The fourth servant song is the longest and best known of the Servant songs. For Christians, this passage is particularly holy. It prefigures, in an astonishing way, the ministry of Jesus. It is a passage about a loser who is declared a winner.

We learn that the Servant of God is not much to look at: “*his appearance was so disfigured*” (2:14). The term “disfigured” was a term used to describe a blemished animal which could not be offered in sacrifice to the Lord because it was imperfect (see Lev 22:17-20; Mal 1:14).

Whilst Saul was chosen as the first king of Israel because he was a head taller than any other person (1 Sam 9:2), the Servant has no special physical glory.

The passage goes on to say in Chapter 53: “*Who has believed our message?*”. We live in an age of cynicism in which people despair of ever really knowing the right thing to believe. So many religions and philosophies compete for people's faith - and so many have proved unworthy of people's trust.

The Suffering Servant had the right message, but many chose not to believe it.

Read: Jn 6:56-65

Discuss:

- What, do you suppose, was so hard that they could not believe Jesus?
- What was Jesus' response to people's unbelief?
- How have you experienced unbelief in people when you have shared the gospel with them?

Question: What is promised to those who do believe the servant and who act on their belief? (Look up Jn 1:12).

Teach:

We learn that the Servant “*grew up before me like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground*” (Is 53:2). The fact that he comes from “dry ground” indicates that the Servant would come from an unlikely place. This calls to mind Nathanel's cynical comment about the Jesus’ home town: “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (Jn 1:45-46).

“*He had no beauty or majesty that we should desire him*” (Is 53:2). This ancient prophecy about Jesus reinforces the fact that there was nothing outwardly to attract anyone to him. He was not rich and did not look like a film star. He came as a servant. In societies preoccupied with personal status and wealth, this is indeed shocking. Jesus was born in a place where animals feed to a peasant girl engaged to a carpenter from the small town of Nazareth in the province of Galilee, a town so unremarkable, it is not even mentioned in the Old Testament.

This servant song also tells us that the Servant "**was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering ... He was despised and we esteemed him not**" (53:3).

Read: Mt 2:13; Lk 22:4; Jn 19:1-3

Discuss: How does what we read in these verses tie in with the statement that the Servant was: "**familiar with suffering. ...He was despised and we esteemed him not**"

Teach:

Jesus was a political refugee fleeing a murderous tyrant (Mt 2:13): he was betrayed by friends (Lk 22:4); he was abused and ridiculed (Jn 19:1-3) before being crucified.

Today, many simply ignore him.

*When Jesus came to Birmingham,
They simply passed him by,
They never hurt a hair of him,
The only let him die;
For men had grown more tender,
And they would not give him pain,
They only passed down the street,
And left him in the rain."*

(Studdart Kennedy, poet and World War 1 British army padre)

What follows are some of the most powerful words in the Bible. We read that the Servant: "**took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows. ...He was crushed for our iniquities (sin, evil); the punishment that brought us peace was upon him.**" ... **We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all**" (53:4-6).

Isaiah's ancient prophecy tells us that this suffering Servant suffered in our place taking the blame for our sins. 700 years after this prophecy, John wrote in the New Testament of the Bible about Jesus, saying:

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 Jn 4:9-10).

Jesus died to take the blame for us for all the bad things we have done that would otherwise keep us from being eligible to live life with a holy God. An exchange was made on that very first Easter. God, as Jesus, exchanged his holiness for our sinfulness on the cross, making us holy and acceptable to God. It was the finest expression of God's love and commitment to us. The 700 year old prophecy of Isaiah about Jesus was true - because God did lay on him the sin and evil of us all.

Read:

Leader's note: Read other sections from the fourth servant song prophecy about Jesus and then ask people to look up the verses in the New Testament where they were fulfilled.

Prophecy about the Suffering Servant

"**pierced for our infirmities**" (v.5).
"**oppressed**" (v.7).
"**he did not open his mouth**" (v.7)
..."**cut off from the land of the living**" (v.8)
"**assigned a grave with the wicked**" (v.9)

"**He was assigned a grave
...with the rich in his death**" (v.9)

"**After the suffering of his soul,
he will see the light of life**" (v,11).
This prophecy speaks of a dead man
who again comes back to life.

Where fulfilled by Jesus

Jn 19:33-34
Mk 14:55-56
Mk 15:3-5
Mk 15:37
Mk 15,25,27. Selwyn Hughes says
that Jesus ate and drank with sinners as
their friend, and was crucified between
two political rebels whose way of
violence he refused to share."⁷
Mt 27:57-59. The fact that Joseph of
Arimathea has his own new tomb meant
that he was quite rich.

Mark 16:5-6

Teach:

The fourth servant song says: "**Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer**" (53:10). The nineteenth century American preacher Octavius Winslow asked, "*Who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas for money, not Pilate for fear, not the Jews for envy, but the Father for love!*"⁸ The suffering death of God's Son, the Servant, was the price God the Father was prepared to pay to rescue you back to himself.

The fourth servant Song of Isaiah is remarkably prophetic of Jesus. This extraordinary fact requires a response from us. Will you accept Jesus death for your sins and let him be your Lord and Saviour?

continued.....

⁷Selwyn Hughes & Philip Greenslade, *Every Day with Jesus*, 29th April, 2003, (Farnham, Surrey, U.K.: CWR)

⁸Octavius Winslow was a great 19th century American non-conformist minister and writer.

Pray:

Leader's note: Invite people to bow their heads and, if they wish, to pray this prayer of commitment to Jesus that will make them a Christian.

Heavenly Father

Thank you for your love for me.

Thank you for sending Jesus to die for me to pay the price for my sins.

I turn from them now

and ask you to forgive me

for living life without you in the past.

I accept you as my Lord

and ask that you fill me

with the empowering presence of your spirit

so that I can follow Jesus faithfully and fulfil your purpose for my life. Amen

Ask that anyone who prayed that prayer for the first time tell you privately afterwards, so you can congratulate them and encourage them.