

"Suffering in our place" - Isaiah 53:4-10 - Good Friday 2022

*Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*5 But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*

*6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

*7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.*

*8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?*

*9 And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

*10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

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Thus far the reading.

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Tonight, we come to the heart of it. Tonight, we celebrate the suffering and death of our Savior, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. And yes, we celebrate it! We don't celebrate pain or death, as such, nor the need for such a sacrifice. Sin is our shame. We celebrate that God's Servant, His Son Jesus Christ, did it on our behalf. We celebrate the love it took – love for His Father and love for us. We celebrate His obedience. We celebrate the result, that we have been redeemed! Our theme tonight is "The Servant Saves by Suffering in Our Place."

The whole story of Good Friday is told by Isaiah eight hundred years before it happened. By oppression and judgment, He was taken away. Jesus was arrested although innocent. Today we would cry out about our rights, but He had none. A kangaroo court convicted Him and sentenced Him to die. They could not come up with one legitimate charge against Him, so they asked Him who is the Truth itself if He were the Son of God, and when He told them, they called Him a liar and a blasphemer and sentenced Him to die.

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They had no legitimate charge, but God did. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. He was utterly innocent, personally, but He took our place and bore our sin. Isaiah even notes that He was innocent, He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the LORD was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering. The guilt He suffered for was ours. Note, too, that we are not the only ones celebrating. The Lord was pleased to crush Him. He was not pleased to cause Him pain but pleased to crush Him on our behalf, in our place, and for our salvation. That was the will of God for us!

Because of our sin, the Servant had to suffer — or we did, and our Heavenly Father chose to pour out His wrath upon His Son instead. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging, we are healed.

Listen to those words: He bore our grief and carried our sorrows. The pains of Hell were His, but He felt them even before the cross. In the garden, amid His prayers, Jesus told the disciples, "My soul is

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deeply grieved, to the point of death." The horror of what He faced for us, all by itself, was nearly enough to kill Him.

But then they mocked Jesus, just as the devil had during the temptations following His Baptism. The devil said, "if you are the Son of God . . .", and the crowd around His cross would cry out, "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET HIM DELIVER Him now, IF HE TAKES PLEASURE IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" People today, oftentimes from within the church as we see it in our world today, reject the notion that Jesus was truly God or His Son. They deny His resurrection. They accuse Jesus of being a failed teacher or a ruined revolutionary put to death for His politically incorrect ideas. They say He was a good man, perhaps, but they do not see Him as their God. Isaiah's words fit, we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

During this, the Servant never cried out or called for justice, or for His rights, as so many do nowadays. He was convicted by an illegal court, for the Sanhedrin could not legally meet, as they did that night, by their own rules! They could not legitimately convict without three witnesses who agreed, or at least two who agreed clearly. But they did! When they dragged Him before Pilate, the Governor sent from Rome had to confess that he found no guilt in Jesus, nothing that deserved this uproar, much less death. The Bible tells us that Pilate

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knew that the Priests had sent Jesus before him because of envy, and yet Pilate condemned Him, an innocent man, to death on the cross. Yet, in all of this, Jesus remained remarkably silent. Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging, we are healed. Although innocent, Pilate had Jesus scourged to try to appease the priests. Pilate said he would teach Him a lesson. What lesson was Jesus supposed to learn from being scourged as an innocent man? That was our scourging! Those were our stripes He bore. He did it for us because we had it all coming. We are healed from the disease of sin and the just wrath of God due to sin because there is no more wrath to pour out. Jesus bore it all, for us...

Even His burial was even part of the prophecy, Yet He was with a rich man in His death. And Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, whose wealth was evident in the carving of a new tomb in the nearby garden, came and took the dead body and placed it in his own new tomb. Every part of the passion and death of our Lord is clearly prophesied by Isaiah. The Suffering Servant who was to come and save us by His suffering was Jesus.

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If that were the whole story, it would be a sad story. It would be the noble tale of a good man who died on behalf of others. Stirring and exemplary, but hardly worth all this fuss two thousand years later. But, as you know, this is not the whole story. Isaiah even knew that truth. He ended this section of his prophecy like this, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

Of course, Jesus had no children in an ordinary way. We are His offspring. In Baptism we have each been adopted into the household of God! His days are prolonged, as Isaiah described it because He rose from the dead and lives eternally! And the good pleasure of the Lord? That phrase means, "the will of God". And what is the will of God? Our Salvation! That is the will of God, that the one who knows and believes and trusts in God to do all that He has promised in connection with Jesus Christ and the crucifixion and the resurrection, shall be saved! There have been thousands of thousands throughout the centuries, and there exists that Church of those that believe today. The good pleasure of the Lord has prospered and shall continue to prosper in the hands of this Servant of the Lord until it shall please the Lord to bring it to an end and bring us all to live in His glory. Isaiah's Prophecies of the Servant have shown it to us, and to all that believe since before the time of Jesus Himself. "The Servant Saves by Suffering in Our Place."

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In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.