

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobnier, Illinois
Good Friday A
April 10, 2020
Isaiah 52:13-53:12

You've Been Served

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes 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. (Isaiah 53:4-6 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, your Suffering Servant and Savior,

This is not a night of rejoicing and laughter. Nor is it a night for sorrow, sadness, and weeping. But it is a night of somber reflection and solemnity. For we hear once again how God takes sin so seriously that, in love for us, He sacrifices His own Son. We hear what our Lord suffered as He felt the full weight of God's judgement over sin. It's a night about our salvation.

As we heard the Passion of our Lord according to St. John, we heard the fulfillment of tonight's Old Testament reading. Isaiah describes for us a picture of our Savior, and it isn't pretty. We see the Servant of God who suffers for us and for our salvation.

In Jesus' parable, the prodigal son desired to be accepted by his father as a servant, but he was welcomed as a son. Jesus is the Son who is sent "not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). And how He served!

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Jesus bears your grief, your sorrows, your sin, your guilt, your iniquity. He is afflicted for your sins - the ones that still trouble you, the ones you've forgotten, as well as the ones that you committed without a thought of the consequences. Yet, this night, the consequences are plainly in view as He bears your infirmities to the cross; for sin brings death, and sickness is but a foretaste of death. So He suffers the destruction of His health and body as part of the wages of sin. This is how He serves you.

While He is nailed to that cross and lifted up to die, while He is crucified between two real criminals, while He is surrounded by jeering crowds and ridiculing rabble, having been beaten

almost to death, held to the cross by nails and gasping for each breath, He suffers immense physical pain. Yet, that is not all He suffered. For while He is executed as a criminal, He is guilty of absolutely nothing. Pilate even said so. So did the repentant thief and the Roman soldier (Luke 23:39, 45). This certainly seems to be a gross miscarriage of justice. Yet, He dies to satisfy God's justice. In fact, we're told that it was God Himself who struck Him, smote Him, and afflicted Him. Jesus suffered pain and death at the hands of His Father because He bears your sin and the sin of the whole world. Jesus dies for sin not His own. Isaiah tells us that Jesus died for the sins of others. Jesus died for you.

Thus this night is about you. For "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way." There's no getting around it, and there's no use denying it. We are all, each and every one of us, sinners who have strayed from our Good Shepherd. By our very nature, we follow our own desires, our own paths. Sometimes we stray unintentionally, not even aware that we have. Other times we deliberately and willfully go astray, not merely wandering away, but running away as fast as our little legs will carry us. In either case, going astray places us in great danger, for there are wolves and lions seeking to devour us. When we leave the protection of our Shepherd, we are in great danger of death and destruction.

So our Good Shepherd comes after us, seeking us, calling us to turn from our sinful ways and return to His fold. He calls us to repent of our sin and return to Him for forgiveness, for He has an endless supply to give. For He is also the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the Lamb that was slain for you. He was wounded and bruised for you because of your sins. By His stripes you are healed. For He stepped in to shield you from God's wrath. By His suffering and death, He has saved you from that wrath and punishment, now and forever.

So tonight is not for mourning and sadness. We are not here for a funeral. Christ does not die to leave you in grief, but to deliver you into God's presence and the fullness of joy. Calvary is hardly a happy sight, but you know by now that the greatest joys that God gives are often masked in a shadow of pain and sorrow. The cross of Jesus brings life for all who believe, but that life is gained through His suffering and death. So also the death of a Christian means deliverance from affliction to eternal life, yet we are left with grief until we are delivered.

There is no doubt: Golgotha is an ugly hill on a darkened day with an innocent Man crucified. Thus we have a solemn celebration this night. But do not mistake that solemnity for despair. As you peer at your Savior on the cross, what can you say but "Thanks be to God"? For by His holy death, you are forgiven for all of your sins. You have been served. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.