

Good Friday Sermon March 25, 2016
God's Planned Salvation
Isaiah 52:13-53:12
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Nine months from today, we will celebrate the birth of Christ here on Christmas morning. Pregnancy lasts nine months. For this reason, today, the Church normally celebrates the Annunciation of our Lord to the Virgin Mary by the Angel. From Luke chapter 1: "Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."(1:30-33) So it is incredibly appropriate that this year Good Friday falls on the day of this Announcement. Jesus is born of Mary for the purpose of accomplishing his work on Good Friday. And his work was planned long before Gabriel visited Mary.

The greatest Good Friday Sermon ever preached was written 700 years before Christ Jesus was conceived in the Virgin's Womb. Jesus' death wasn't an accident. Not only did he predict it to his disciples several times before he was betrayed by his pupil Judas, brutally treated, and murdered, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah in great detail of Christ's passion centuries before. You'll be hard pressed to find an account that expresses so clearly the purpose and result of Christ's death as Isaiah's account of the Suffering Servant. Not only the events of that strange Friday were predicted from of old, but their unique purpose as planned by God.

Isaiah writes of a man, yet to be born. He is God's Servant. He shall act wisely, he will be lifted up, and will be exalted. Yet, this Servant of God is not a beautiful one. His appearance is

so disfigured, men can't keep their eyes on him. Yet, his story will sprinkle many nations so that even kings will bow down to his marred image on a tree. Although he was rejected by the world, what he has done for the world has been and will continue to be proclaimed to all nations, so that everyone great and small will hear the good news.

Isaiah makes it clear that this man will suffer. "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He makes it clear that it is God's plan that he suffer. "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief." Yet, why? Why must his servant suffer? What terrible thing has he done? Nothing. "He had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth." Rather God calls him "the righteous one, my servant." This man does not deserve to suffer. God himself declares this man righteous. Yet it is God's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. What strange behavior. Yet Isaiah makes it clear for whom the man suffers. He does not suffer for his own sake.

"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. 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." Christ Jesus is the Righteous Servant who suffers. And he suffers for us sinners. God punishes *him* in *our stead*. It is like the good kid in class serving detention for you when you cussed out the teacher. Or rather, the innocent man being executed for the murderer, who goes free.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah's prophecy does not speak of our works. It speaks of our sin. God's plan for our salvation does not include us doing our fair share. It

involves God punishing Christ Jesus for us going astray. St. Paul teaches the same thing as Isaiah, “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.” (Romans 3:23-25) John the Baptist expresses this as well. “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus is without sin. Yet God takes all our sin and places it on him. Every one of us has strayed like a lost sheep. We’re not the heroes in this story. We’re the ones who sabotage our own salvation. Yet, Christ suffers *for us* to save us, despite what we’ve done.

When we look at Christ’s passion, we see our sin. He suffers what we should suffer. When we look at the bloody sweat, the marred appearance, the agony and bitter dying, we see the severity of God’s wrath upon *our* sin. The hymnist writes, “Ye who think of sin but lightly Nor suppose the evil great Here may view its nature rightly, Here its guilt may estimate. Mark the sacrifice appointed, See who bears the awful load; ‘Tis the Word the Lord’s anointed, Son of Man and Son of God.” (LSB 451) When we look upon Christ’s suffering, knowing that he does it for us, and then when we examine ourselves for every time, we’ve gone astray, the guilt can become unbearable. My careless words, my hateful thoughts, my straying eyes, my laziness, my selfishness, all these are blows to my Lord. Yet, the passion of Christ does not simply show us the severity of our sins. It shows us the extremity of God’s love for us.

“O wondrous Love, what have you done! The Father offers up His Son., Desiring our salvation. O Love, how strong You are to save! You lay the One into the grave Who built the earth’s foundation.” (LSB 438) Before you were born, before you were a twinkle in your father’s eye, before the foundation of the world was set, God knew you and loved you. Yes, he knew

your sin. He knew that you would go astray. He knew that you would deserve hell. Yet, he loved you too much to let that happen. God loved *you* so much he sent Christ, his eternal Son to pay your debt. And Christ Jesus goes willingly out of love for his Father and for you.

“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 before its shearers is silent so he opened not his mouth.” This not only describes the historical fact that Christ did not answer the chief priests and Pilate, even as he was falsely accused. It demonstrates Christ’s willingness to suffer for you and his unwillingness to condemn you. Jesus Christ loves you. That is why he suffers.

It is good to see the measure of God’s wrath on sin when you look at Christ’s passion. It is good to see God’s extreme love for you that he would send his Son to die such a death for your sake. And it is of the utmost importance that you believe that this does you incredible good!

“When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring... Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.” Because your sins are on Jesus, they are not on you. Because Jesus suffers for what you’ve done wrong, you won’t suffer for it. Since Jesus died for you, you will not see eternal death. God has secured you as Christ’s offspring forever. Jesus has satisfied his soul by paying for yours. You will prosper with Christ, because he has bought you.

Isaiah predicts Christ’s suffering and death. He teaches exactly *why* Jesus had to suffer so much and what tremendous good it does us. And remarkably, Isaiah doesn’t only predict Christ’s death. He predicts his resurrection. Isaiah declares, “he was cut off out of the land of the living... And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death.” Yet he also declares,

“He shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days.” Isaiah didn’t just predict the events we focus on today, the death of our Lord. He predicted what we will celebrate on the third day. Christ Jesus lives. We know how the story ends for him. And thanks to the Prophet Isaiah, we know how the story will end for us as well.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.