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Christ the King & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Cody & Powell, WY

Good Friday

March 29, 2024

Text: Isaiah 52:13–53:12

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is customary on Good Friday to read the Passion of our Lord and Savior from John's Gospel, chapters 18-19. We use the word "Passion" in a very specific way, referring to the events that Jesus suffered, those things done to Him and which He endure in love for sinners so that they might be saved. Our Lord's Passion recorded in John 18-19 describes Jesus being betrayed by Judas Iscariot, Peter's denial, Pilate's interrogation, the soldiers flogging Jesus, crowning Him with thorns, clothing Him in a purple robe, and mocking Him.

John's Passion records the crowd demanding our Lord's crucifixion. Eventually, Pilate capitulated to their demands. Roman soldiers crucified Jesus between two criminals. The last words of Jesus in John's Passion are beautiful, powerful statement of the finality of our salvation, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). Our Lord's precious body, broken and marred but certainly dead, was cared for by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea as they buried Him in an unused tomb. All these things happened to Him; He suffered for us and for our salvation.

In the Passion of Jesus, you, me, and all sinners see and experience divine, redemptive love. The apostle John described the Father's love for the world as being most clearly seen in the atoning death of Jesus. I John 4:9–10, "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world ... to be the propitiation for our sins." The Father's love is seen in Jesus, God's incarnate Son, taking our sins upon Himself and suffering for us; Christ's Passion reveals God's redemptive love! During those hard, difficult times when it's easy to ask, "Does God really love me?",

look to the cross of Jesus. Read the Passion accounts in the Gospels; sing hymns that extol our Lord's death and resurrection. With those inspired words ringing in your heart and soul, remember Jesus dying on the cross is God's unchanging, unshakeable love for you and the world.

But there is another Passion of our Lord recorded not in the New Testament but in the Old. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and through the gift of prophecy, the prophet Isaiah, in the 8th century B.C., describes the Passion of our Lord. In fact, Isaiah provides details about Jesus' life, suffering, and death not fully described in any of the New Testament Gospels.

Isaiah described Jesus as having "no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (Is. 53:2). Jesus was an ordinary looking 1st century Jewish man. This detail explains, in part, why the Jews were so offended by Jesus. Isn't this the carpenter's son from Nazareth (Matt. 13:55)? Can anything good come out of Nazareth (Jn. 1:46)? And yet, Jesus made the most shocking claims. "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn. 8:58). "Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die (Jn. 11:25-26). The carpenter's Son from podunk Nazareth says He is Almighty God who gives people power over death!

Isaiah's description of an ordinary-looking Jesus also gives explanation as to why Pontius Pilate was so perplexed by Jesus. "Are you the king of the Jews?" (Jn. 18:33). Jesus didn't look like a king. He had no armies, no money, and no political power in Jerusalem or Rome. Just a Jew with some followers. But Jesus claimed to be more than an earthly king. "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn. 18:36) and "I came to bear witness about the truth...Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice" (Jn. 18:37). This lowly Jew claims His kingdom is greater than the earthly kingdom of the Roman Caesars. For His kingdom is established not on the authority of legions, military might, or constitutions but transcendent truth. This prompts Pilate to ask, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38).

Isaiah's Passion goes beyond our Lord's ordinary appearance during His earthly ministry. The suffering Jesus endured changed everything. Many were astonished at Jesus on the cross because "His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind" (52:14). The change in Jesus' appearance was so profound that He "was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows; and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Is. 53:3). It was not Roman crucifixion that caused such alternation, at least, not by itself. No, something deeper, more wondrous and awe-inspiring altered our Lord's appearance.

"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...and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:4-6). The physical suffering was intense. The entirety of man's sin and all that results from man's sin was laid upon Jesus. All our physical maladies, diseases, deformities, aches and pains were laid upon Jesus in addition to the flogging, thorns, and nails. But the spiritual affliction He endured was worse. Upon Him was laid our emotional, mental, and spiritual afflictions culminating in the greatest sorrow of all, complete and total separation from His Father.

On Golgotha, Jesus was stricken and afflicted in body and soul by God! "Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin..." (Is. 53:10). The appearance of Jesus was so altered because in body and soul, He endured His Father's wrath and judgment against human sin and all its effects. In Psalm 22:6, King David described Jesus on the cross, "But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people." Such is the effect of sin upon our human nature. It degrades, corrupts, and defiles.

The Lord Jesus offered Himself, His entire self, body and soul, on our behalf to satisfy His Father's just wrath and judgment against man's sin. In Jesus on

the cross, we most clearly see God's wrath against sin. We must not fall for the ever-present, real temptation to downplay the seriousness of our sins. The cross reminds us that sin requires the death of the sinner. Jesus, God's holy Son, became the sinner on the cross dying in our stead, enduring God's just and righteous anger against sin. In Jesus on the cross, we see God's justice and God's love meet together. The result is love satisfies divine justice; love overcomes the multitude of man's sin. God is love; May He be praised, loved, and adored now and forever for loving us unto salvation.

Isaiah ended his Passion of Jesus with a hint of our Lord's resurrection from the dead and His on-going intercession for the people He redeems by His own self-sacrifice. "He shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand... he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors" (Is. 53:10b, 12). After offering Himself as the sacrifice to take away all sin and its effect, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead to give His people the blessed fruit of His holy love.

It is in the Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ that redemption, forgiveness, joy, peace, and courage have come into the world. May the fruits of His Passion fill your heart, mind, body and soul, now and into the ages of ages...

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.