

Good Friday  
March 25, 2016

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Isaiah 53:1-10

### “Struck Down by God”

On this most holy night, we stand in solemn silence at the foot of the cross. Out there, life goes on as usual. It's certainly sad, but out there, many could care less about the cross and what it means to the one we know as Jesus. But not us; we are gathered here to face the reality of what happened on that hill outside of Jerusalem so many years ago. In this world full of constant noise and distraction-this world full of indifference to the Gospel and blindness to the things of God, we are here. So I invite you to open your eyes, your ears, and all your senses to the magnitude of this awesome event and contemplate just what it means. I also think we need to be reminded of something tonight and it is this: Our Christian faith is not just good advice that can help us cope with the problems we encounter and make us feel better about ourselves. Our faith is based on the atoning death of Jesus Christ for sinners. And tonight, we ponder His death and our role in it.

Have you ever thought of Jesus' death that way? That you and I actually had a role in what happened to him? So much of the time, I think we tend to look at the crucifixion like it was just another man, among many, who died at the hands of the Romans. Jesus did die, that is certain. But he was not just another man and his death was not a normal death. He was God in the flesh who broke into his own creation, born as baby to a virgin in Bethlehem. He was true God and true man who grew up to be a great teacher, healer and miracle-worker. But for so many of us, this is where we stop. We want the Super-Jesus who can heal diseases by a touch or can turn water into wine. We want the Jesus who teaches us to love others as ourselves. We want any of these Jesus'. But what we don't want is the one who looked like he lost. What we don't want is Jesus hanging dead on a cross.

But on this Good Friday, that's what we get. Jesus was crucified. On this dark night, the healer, the teacher, and the miracle worker who was the Son of God was struck down by his Father.

The prophet Isaiah, writing hundreds of years before the actual event, describes it clearly. “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. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”

God the Father would be the ultimate source of the sufferings of his faithful Son. He struck him down!. But why? Why would he do that? Couldn't he have done this another way? I'm sure he could have but he didn't. In this great mystery, God showed his love for us, the sinners that we are, by putting the punishment all of us deserve on his perfect Son.

“He was pierced for our transgressions,” Isaiah continues to write. “He was crushed for our iniquities.” Pierced and then crushed. Graphic as this sounds, it is exactly what happened. He was pierced when the nails went into his already battered, bruised, and bloodied body. And then he was crushed by the weight and the pain of our sin. Believe it or not, many people in those days stayed on crosses longer than Jesus. They hung there, sometimes for days, slowly fading away. But God poured out his wrath on the Christ. He allowed him to take every sin any person has ever committed and every sin any person will ever commit and those sins crushed him causing him excruciating pain to the point that he finally gave up and died. And all of us had a role in this thing.

Isaiah reminds us that, “All of us like sheep have gone astray. We have turned-every one of us— to our own way.” Yes, there is certainly a lot of good in all of us but In spite of that good, the bottom line is that we are also bad people; we know we are. The proof is in the brokenness of so many of our lives- brokenness that only we might know but brokenness nonetheless. The proof is in the brokenness of this world with all the killing and the hate. The proof is in our lustful desires and our quests for fame and fortune. The proof is in the lives we live on social media where we feel perfectly comfortable saying things to others and about others that we would never say to them in person. The proof is in our selfishness and our lack of concern for our neighbors. Oh pastor, “it's not that bad” you might be thinking. “Sure, we've messed up, but we're not as bad as some people. Besides, this is the 21st century! Society has evolved. We've evolved! Everything is more complex now and God is probably OK with us bending the rules.”

The truth is we can rationalize things all we want but it doesn't change a thing. We *have* gone astray, so much so, that a lot of the time, we don't even see what our sinfulness is doing to us. But we must be reminded, especially tonight, that God is holy, and He demands holiness from us. We are the crown of his creation, created in His own image. But because of the fall, we are not holy. We are not perfect. We are flawed in our minds

and in our bodies. We are flawed in our relationships with others and most importantly we are flawed in our relationship with God and He is not happy with that. We can fool ourselves all we want but he is not happy. In fact on our own, he actually turns away from us because we are so far from what he created us to be. And that is why the cross stares us in the face tonight.

The cross that held not just another innocent man for crimes he didn't commit but the cross that held the body of the promised Messiah— the Christ. The Christ who was nailed to the wooden beams, abandoned by the Father, and crushed as he bore the unholiness of all people. This *is* what happened and this means everything because this one- of- a- kind death, according to God's Word in Isaiah "has brought us peace." "With his wounds we are healed because The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." This is why today is Good Friday.

Stop for a moment and just think about your life tonight in light of what it is we are remembering. The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ has solved a problem none of us could ever solve on our own. What a wonderful Gospel we preach, even on this dark night. It is power to the weak and life to the dead. This is the good news no other religion or philosophical movement can touch because it is not about what we do but what was done for us! Christ has taken our punishment. And what a joyous thing this is because now, through our faith, God is satisfied with us for Christ's sake. This means we are alive to receive the good things from Him- the good things of his grace, mercy, forgiveness and salvation! Yes, we will continue to experience the limitations of our flawed and sinful lives in this world- a world that be can be cruel and unforgiving. But because of what Jesus did for us on the lowest place we would ever expect to find God — the crude execution tool of a cross— no matter what we have to go through, we live by faith, trusting that our relationship with our creator is restored.

It's all about Christ my friends. This is not a cliché. Our faith; our identity; our eternal life in heaven is all about Christ and Christ alone.

You know, there's a song with that title, *Christ Alone*. You've probably heard it before. It's a great song. In fact, on Sunday morning we will gather outside at our Easter sunrise service and we will sing this song led by one of our talented young members of the congregation. The words are powerful because they tell the story—the story of Christ that is our story. The second verse actually follows Christ from the cradle to the cross and the message is the one of our salvation. The powerful words go like this:

*In Christ alone, who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless Babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save.  
'Til on the cross as Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied.  
For every sin on Him was laid;  
Here in the death of Christ I live.*

We live because He died. We should die, but through faith in Christ, we don't. This is the message of Good Friday. Thanks be to God. **Amen.**