

September 15 & 19, 2021 – Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin  
The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

### **Isaiah 50:4-10**

The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. <sup>5</sup> The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. <sup>6</sup> I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. <sup>7</sup> Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. <sup>8</sup> He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! <sup>9</sup> It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up. <sup>10</sup> Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let the one who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on their God.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I greet you today with the words that Paul used to greet the Galatians at the beginning of his letter to them: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The second part of Isaiah’s prophecy (chapters 40-66) presents exquisite Hebrew poetry, which is seen in the structure and proclaimed in the message. The structure of these final 27 chapters is based on threes. There are three sections with nine chapters in each section and each of those sections is divided into triads. When you get to the very middle of all of those sets of three, you come to chapter 53, which is the very familiar account of the suffering servant of the Sovereign Lord. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone stray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (vs. 5-6) That comforting and reassuring message announces the work of the suffering Servant of the Lord and the fruit of that work. In these chapters five servant songs reveal the love of our heavenly Father and the future ministry of Jesus Christ, the suffering Servant. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit Isaiah wrote these words about 650 years before the Son of God took on human form and took up his rescue mission. The verses on which we reflect today are part of the third of five servant songs contained in these 27 chapters.

In this third servant song the Servant shows why he can be about his work with great confidence and urges us to live and die with confidence because of his work. The servant has received a learned and instructed tongue from the almighty God. This is what gives him such great confidence. He has been instructed by none other than the God of creation, the God of free and faithful grace. Jesus’ ministry discloses that tongue. His preaching captivated his listeners who recognized that he was no ordinary teacher. His words sustain the weary. How have his words recorded the Gospels done that for you? What peace I have as he reminds me day after day that my many sins are forgiven! What comfort and hope pour into our hearts as we hear his promises of the resurrection to eternal life! O thank you, Servant Jesus, for your learned and instructed tongue! What wonderful refreshment you bring to my weary soul!

He is confident in carrying out his mission because of his regular communication with the Sovereign Lord. In verses four and five he says: “He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears.” Remember how often during his public ministry that Jesus went to a secluded place to pray! Here was confidence building time as he also listened to his heavenly Father!

So he expresses his great confidence: I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. <sup>6</sup> I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Don’t we see Jesus here? Strengthened by the Sovereign Lord he confidently carried out his mission. He knew what that meant. We heard that in the Gospel lesson this morning. He told his disciples exactly what was going to happen to him. They didn’t yet understand. Peter even tried to convince him that this wasn’t what would happen. But Jesus confidently tells Peter and the other disciples that any effort to turn him from his mission was the work of the Devil.

Listen again to the suffering Servant as he speaks in verses 7 & 8: Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. <sup>8</sup>He who vindicates me is near. Here again, these prophetic words point to the Savior. Jesus looked to God his Father for help and strength. He often prayed to his Father, many times alone. St. John has written down our Lord's High Priestly Prayer, in which he says: "Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You" (John 17:1). The gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke have recorded the time when Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane prayed to God the Father for strength because of his approaching death. God did help his Son. An angel came to Jesus and strengthened him (Lk 22:43).

He would not be deterred from his mission. He says that he has set his face like flint. Jesus set his face to go up to Jerusalem. There his enemies, and death by crucifixion, awaited him. His disciples tried to dissuade him. But Jesus would do his Father's will. He would secure our salvation. He would not be ashamed to be our Savior.

Jesus was falsely accused by the Sanhedrin. Christ was falsely condemned by Pontius Pilate. No one can prove Jesus guilty of any wrong, for he is without sin. He is the Holy One of God.

Jesus challenged his enemies to show him where he had sinned or done wrong. None of his enemies could rightly condemn him. Therefore, the Messiah speaks as he does here in the words of Isaiah. God himself would proclaim Jesus to be righteous by raising him from the dead.

The sufferings servant is confident because he knows that none of the accusations against him will stand. He says in verse 9: It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up. The accusations are like cloth infested with moths. They will not last. God the Father declared his Son victorious by raising him from the dead and placing him at his right hand. We have been declared innocent and victorious also. Our hope of eternal life rests in Christ Jesus.

As we look at the final verse of this reading, we see that the suffering Servant, our Savior, wants us to also face life, both our troubles and our joys with confidence like his. Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let the one who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on their God. Those who turn to the Lord will find "light." By nature we are in the dark and have no light, but that all changes when we trust in the Sovereign Lord as the suffering Servant has. We receive life and salvation through the Servant of the Lord. God invites us to believe, to rely, that is to lean our whole weight, our worries and troubles and fears on the Sovereign Lord.

Those who fear the Lord but are walking in darkness can be the same people. They are people who are troubled, like David and Peter during their times of great sin. Such faltering believers can find support when they lean on the Lord God. David found help in the Lord when he was in distress: "I will exalt you, O LORD, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. O LORD my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. O LORD, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit" (Psalm 30:1-3).

There is no one who can condemn us either, not because we are holy, but because we have been forgiven by God for the sake of his Son Jesus. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:32-34).

Christ, our Master, gives us an excellent example of how to obtain strength in this life. We can turn to God and in Jesus' name ask for help in all our troubles, both physical and spiritual. Our Savior has made it possible for us to call on God for help.

The Servant has taken on himself our guilt and endured our punishment. Now we are declared forgiven and assured of the never-ending peace and joy of living in the presence of the Sovereign Lord and his suffering Servant. So move forward in life with joy and confidence. Yes, there is much that will make us weary—most often our own sins and weaknesses. But the works and words of the Servant sustain us as they point us both to the peace and joy he supplies and ahead to glories of heaven. Amen

Pastor Joel Jaeger