

### **Isaiah's Passion History**

**Sermon Text: Isaiah 53:4-5** <sup>4</sup> Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

### **Sermon Theme: We Behold Jesus as the Willing Substitute for the Guilty Ones.**

In the name of our Savior Jesus, who became our substitute so that we might be saved eternally, dear fellow redeemed;

The term 'substitute' is a familiar concept in our society. A person who acts as a substitute takes the place of another and acts in his or her behalf. For example, in the field of education when a teacher becomes ill and is unable to conduct classes, a substitute teacher is called in to teach on behalf of the sick instructor. There is also the use of substitutes in the field of sports. With team sports when a team member is unable to perform for a variety of reasons, another player is sent in to take his or her place.

There are also other areas of life which make use of substitutes, but there is one that stands out far and above them all. This unique substitute has to do with our relationship with God. Even as a teacher is unable to teach in the classroom due to sickness or an athlete is unable to perform on account of an injury or exhaustion, so also we are totally incapable of fulfilling the exacting requirements of the law of God. Jesus reveals how very high the standard of God's law is for us when He states, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Mt. 5:48) No matter how hard we try to measure up to that high level of perfection, we fall way, way short. On account of our many failings we experience great distress of soul and mind. Our conscience is severely troubled being mindful of God's great displeasure and our deserved punishment. However, God in His great love for us did not want us to go through life with a sin-plagued conscience or be faced with the dreadful fate of hell. And so, He prepared a substitute for us who would take away all our guilt and deliver us from all our deserved punishment. In our Scripture text for this morning, we behold that wonderful substitute through the prophetic eyes of Isaiah who sees the promised Christ as the willing substitute for the guilty.

At the very outset of Isaiah's prophetic book, he reveals how desperately we are in need of a substitute who can take our place and save us. In the opening verses of chapter 1, Isaiah describes the deplorable condition the children of Israel were in on account of their sinfulness. The picture he paints could well be used to describe the general condition of the world at large. Isaiah laments, "Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick,

And the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.” (Vv.4-6) Referring to the human body in a figurative way, Isaiah depicts our sinful condition, describing it as being disease ridden, sick and wounded. Our whole being - heart, soul, and mind are infected with, as it were, spiritual sickness and disease.

Such ailments are apparent by the wrong kind of thoughts, desires, inclinations, and emotions found in us. And when those feelings go unchecked, they manifest themselves in our lives through sinful words and actions. If this spiritual infection goes unattended, the wounds can fester, causing us to experience pain, anguish, misery, fear, depression and all manner of suffering of mind and heart. All this is a result of our sinfulness.

David recognized the sin in his life to be the cause of his troubles and described the suffering and anguish he experienced because of it, saying, “O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure! For Your arrows pierce me deeply, And Your hand presses me down. There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, Nor any health in my bones Because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering Because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are full of inflammation, And there is no soundness in my flesh.” (Ps. 38:1-7)

If this spiritual ailment is not taken care of properly, the suffering we experience because of our sin will not stop when this temporal life comes to an end, but will continue on into eternity and will become increasingly worse. For without a remedy for our sin we are faced with being separated from God throughout all eternity.

If the barrier of sin which separates us from God is to be removed and if we are to be delivered from the misery and punishment sin brings with it, we need a substitute who can take our place and pay the price for our sins. Also, it is of absolute importance that this substitute be known and believed in for eternal salvation.

Isaiah reveals the substitute God prepared for us by referring to Him as the suffering Servant of the Lord. In the Gospel record, Jesus identified Himself as this promised Servant and then proceeded to give evidence of it by His mighty works and divine words of wisdom. As true God and true Man Jesus alone could pay the costly penalty for all the sins of the world and fully satisfy the just demands of God.

As we examine verse 4 and 5 of our text, we find repeated reference to Jesus substitutionary work for us. Listen to the repeated use of the pronouns of “He” and “our”. “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.”

As our substitute Jesus took upon Himself all our infirmities and carried all our sorrows on His shoulders. He took upon Himself all the suffering, all the woes, all the pains, and all the sorrows which are the consequence of every single human sin throughout the history of mankind and endured them all. He subjected Himself to the

righteous wrath of God for all the sins of the world. He suffered the eternal pangs of hell which everyone of us has deserved for our sinfulness. All this He did in our place so that we might receive the priceless gift of the healing balm of God's forgiveness and complete deliverance from His punishment.

When the Jews saw Jesus suffering under this tremendous load, Isaiah reveals what they were thinking concerning Jesus, saying of them, "we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." The word "smitten" is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe how God visited nations and individuals with plagues or diseases on account of their acts of rebellion against Him. Therefore when the Jews witnessed Jesus' suffering and death on cross, they thought God was visiting Him with divine judgment for His transgressions. And yet, it was not for any sin on Jesus' part that He suffered punishment. The apostle Peter testifies concerning Jesus' holiness and righteousness, saying that He "committed no sin nor was guile found in His mouth." (1 Pet. 2:22)

It was because Jesus came to be our substitute that He suffered the punishment of God in our place. Holy Scripture declares, "For (God) He made (Jesus) Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21) God placed all the guilt of our sins on Jesus and visited Him with the punishment we deserved because of our sins. This is further borne out in these words of Isaiah, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." Because of our transgressions Jesus was dealt the death blow. And because of our iniquities Jesus was utterly crushed.

All this Jesus willingly suffered for us. He could have delivered Himself from all this at any time. When the Jews mocked and jeered at Jesus saying for Him to come down from the cross and save Himself, Jesus could have very easily done just that. But this was not His will. Already in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus had declared what His will was in this matter when He said to the heavenly Father "Your will be done." With these words Jesus revealed that His will was the same as the Father's who had sent Him into the world to suffer and die for our eternal salvation.

This willingness on the part of Jesus to take our place as our substitute was not prompted by any merit or worthiness in us. In Romans 5 we read, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Vv.7,8) It was on account of Jesus' great undeserved love for us that He was prompted to willingly become our substitute to suffer and die for us.

The final result of Jesus' substitutionary work is revealed in these words of our text, "The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Jesus provided us with the perfect cure for our diseased ridden heart. As a result of the punishment Jesus underwent, He has given us true peace of mind, because through Him the barrier of sin, which separates us from God, has been completely removed. Jesus has restored unto us life, hope, and salvation. Because He was our substitute Savior, He says to us as we repent of our sins, "be of good cheer your sins are forgiven."

As we continue down the road of life, we need to remember that it was not Jesus'

mission to remove all the earthly ills, sorrows, and sufferings in life. For if this would have been the case, then we would have heaven here on earth. Such a life will not be ours until we reach our heavenly home. As long as this sin-cursed world continues to exist, there will be pain and suffering. Yet, we are comforted in receiving the healing balm and ointment of God's forgiveness and boundless grace and mercy through our crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

May we never cease to give thanks and praise to Jesus for His substitutionary work which He performed for our eternal salvation. Amen.