

Isaiah's Passion History

Sermon Text: Isaiah 53:7-8 ⁷He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. ⁸He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

Sermon Theme: Isaiah Reveals our Submissive Savior.

In the name of the Lamb of God Jesus Christ who has taken away the sin of the world, dear fellow redeemed;

There was an Ethiopian returning home from Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit sent the evangelist Philip to help him learn of his Savior Jesus Christ. The Ethiopian was reading in the book of Isaiah, reflecting on the very same words that serve as a basis for our meditation today. As he considered this section in Isaiah, the Ethiopian didn't know whom the prophet was referring to. And so, he asked Philip to tell him who this was and what all this meant. With this invitation Philip began to make known the good news of salvation, explaining how Isaiah was pointing to Jesus Christ and His completed work of redemption.

Through these words the prophet revealed Jesus as our submissive Savior. Picturing Jesus as a sheep led to the slaughter without complaint and as a silent lamb before its shearer, Isaiah prophetically testified of Jesus willingly allowing Himself to be captured, falsely accused, ridiculed, beaten, condemned to die, and finally executed by crucifixion. All this Jesus willingly submitted to in order that He might be offered up on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world.

As the Holy Spirit opened the Ethiopian's eyes to see and his heart to believe in Jesus as his Lord and Savior, he was filled with great joy and gladness. He rejoiced and was thankful to God for Jesus' willingness to suffer so much for him so that he could receive God's gift of forgiveness and eternal salvation.

Throughout the passion account of Jesus our Lord can be seen again and again as our submissive Savior. Beginning at the Mount of Olives, a large mob came out with clubs and swords to lay hold of Jesus. As He saw them approaching, He knew full well whom they were seeking and what was in store for Him in the coming hours. In spite of this foreknowledge, Jesus didn't try to hide the fact he was the One they were after or try to run away from them and hide. When His disciples began to defend Him from His captors, Jesus prevented them. Even though He could have summoned twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from this mob, Jesus allowed Himself to be taken prisoner, to be tied up like a dangerous criminal, and led away captive. Jesus willingly submitted Himself to this mistreatment so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled that said the promised Savior would be led like a lamb to the slaughter.

From this time onward Jesus was, as Isaiah foretold, oppressed and afflicted. It was late in the evening when Jesus was led bound to Jerusalem in order to stand trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin that same night. False witnesses had been rounded up by the Jews to make accusations of wrongdoing by Jesus. Two of the false witnesses said of Jesus, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'" (Mt. 26:61) These perjurers misrepresented what Jesus had said. They made it out as if Jesus had threatened to destroy the temple in Jerusalem, when in truth Jesus had been talking about His coming death and resurrection. "And the high priest arose and said to Him, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it that these men testify against You?' But Jesus kept silent." (Mt. 26:62,63)

Later in the trial the Jewish court accused Jesus of blasphemy and declared Him worthy of death for claiming to be the eternal Son of God. Jesus' reaction to this charge again was silence and total submission. Even though gross injustices were being perpetrated in this mock trial, Jesus still did not cry out in protest. Instead, "as a sheep before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth."

After Jesus was condemned to die, Mark reports "Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophecy!' And the officers struck Him with the palm of their hands." (14:65) No person let alone the Lord is deserving of such degrading and cruel mistreatment. And yet, Jesus allowed Himself to be treated so shamefully and cruelly, bearing it patiently and without complaint. Jesus looked upon such treatment as part of the sin-load He was called on to patiently bear for us and all the world.

Early the next morning Jesus was led bound to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate to stand trial in a civil court of law. Whereupon the Jewish leaders leveled the following charges against Jesus, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." (Lk. 23:2) With these words Jesus was accused of being a subversive enemy of the Jews and the Roman government.

Looking to the gospel record, we learn that instead of Jesus perverting the Jews, He sought to help them spiritually and physically. Neither did Jesus try to lead the Jews in revolt against the Romans. Rather, He encouraged them to honor, respect, and obey the laws of the government.

After Pilate heard the charges brought against Jesus, he asked Him, saying, "'Do you answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!' But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled." (Mk. 15:4,5) Any other innocent person being falsely accused and facing the death penalty would have vigorously protested and tried to defend himself. But Jesus willingly allowed Himself to be falsely accused so that while on the cross He could be charged with the sins of the whole world and suffer the penalty of death and hell for us.

When Pilate heard Jesus was from Galilee, he thought he had a way of getting out from under the predicament of being pressed into sentencing an innocent man to death. As a Galilean Jesus would be under the jurisdiction of King Herod who was in town at

the time. And so, Pilate sent Jesus to Herod to be tried by him. This is what transpired in the hearing before Herod, “Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.” (Lk. 23:9-11) Jesus was oppressed and afflicted by His enemies, yet He opened not His mouth.

When Jesus was back in the hands of Pilate, Pilate sought to gain sympathy for Jesus among the Jews by having Jesus flogged. Pilate thought that if they saw Jesus suffering, they would have pity on Him and consent to have Jesus released. With the lash of the whip digging deeply into His back, Jesus felt great physical pain. Yet, as He was being severely beaten, Jesus did not cry out for them to stop or for them to give Him any kind of relief. Willingly He bore all the pain inflicted on Him, suffering as our submissive Savior.

While in the custody of the Roman soldiers, Jesus also allowed Himself to be subjected to the following degrading and cruel mistreatment, “And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.” (Mk. 15:17-20)

With Jesus being true God He deserved to be honored, worshiped and praised by all people, and yet He permitted Himself to be debased and humiliated. He willingly suffered this so that through His great humiliation as our Savior we might be exalted on high and glorified with Him in heaven.

The road of suffering for Jesus finally led to Golgotha where He was nailed to the accursed tree to suffer and die for us. “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.” As Jesus walked that lonely road which led to the place where He would empty the cup of suffering, He approached it with a willing submissive spirit.

While Jesus was extended on the cross, the verbal abuse and ridicule was still being hurled at Him. Every time His enemies mocked and taunted Him, not once did Jesus have an unkind thought or angry word for any of them. The apostle Peter testifies of Jesus’ reaction to this abuse, “when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.” (1 Pet. 2:23) Instead of retaliating or threatening revenge against His enemies, Jesus prayed for them, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Lk. 23:34)

The oppression and affliction Jesus willingly submitted Himself to came not only at the hands of His enemies, but also at the hands of His heavenly Father. This kind of oppression and affliction was far worse beyond our wildest imagination. For after placing the heavy load of the guilt of all the sins of the world on Jesus, God the Father visited His Son with a hellish punishment for us.

If an uninformed bystander would have witnessed all that Jesus was subjected to, he might have thought Jesus was the very worst enemy of mankind and that He was being

defeated. However, Jesus' display of meekness, patient endurance, and quiet submission shows us One who was indeed a victor. Jesus is our dearest and greatest Friend who by His sufferings and death made it possible for all our sins to be fully atoned for.

By rehearsing all the dreadful details of what Jesus went through first at the hands of His enemies and then at the hands of His Father we do so not out of a sense of morbid or sadistic delight. Rather, we speak of these things so that we might be reminded of the extent of Jesus' great love for us. So great was His love for us that He willingly submitted Himself to all this pain, shame, and suffering so that we might experience peace, joy, and happiness in this life, and finally when we depart this world to enjoy an everlasting exalted life of glory in heaven.

It is with good reason that the Ethiopian rejoiced with great joy and gladness when he learned of His Savior through the testimony of the prophet Isaiah. For he learned of a submissive Savior who lovingly and willingly subjected Himself to tremendous suffering so that he could be blessed with the gift of an eternal life of perfect joy and bliss in heaven. May we rejoice anew over our submissive Savior Jesus Christ and sing the praises of His holy name. Amen