

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity, November 10, 2013**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 353, 16:1-2, 367, 352, 52.

Lessons: Isaiah 53:3-7, Romans 8:31-39, Mark 14:55-65.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 50:4-10

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

As you read the Old Testament, there are certain passages and sections that jump out at you as plainly pointing to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah who was sent to earth to redeem mankind from sin. These are called Messianic prophecies. We hear in the word of God today words that plainly point forward to and talk about the Messiah.

Our text today talks about a willingness to suffer because of confidence in God. Today we make application first to Jesus, the Messiah, and then to all who believe in him. Please listen carefully as we hear about

**THE MESSIAH'S WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER**

- 1. He relies on God, “*the Sovereign Lord*”.**
- 2. We see here some of the suffering Jesus endured.**
- 3. Yet through it all, he put his confidence and trust in the Lord God.**
- 4. Let us put all our hope in the Lord God and walk in his light.**

Did you notice the tremendous respect and honor Isaiah – and the speaker – have for “*The Sovereign Lord*”? He speaks of him as “sovereign”, that is, supreme, all-powerful and deserving of the highest honor and respect. This is the very idea that Luther is conveying with the word “fear” as he explains the first commandment.

As we look at this chapter, we realize that the only person who fits this description is Jesus. In fact, this section is called by Bible scholars one of the “servant passages” in the Old Testament, sections that describe Jesus Christ, the servant of God who fulfilled everything that God wanted and demanded. This passage speaks of the perfect, willing obedience of God's righteous Servant.

Because Jesus was God and man in one person, we find him sometimes speaking, or spoken of, as the Lord God; at other times, as man and the servant of Jehovah. In addition to dying and thus paying the price for all sins of all mankind, he was to declare the truths which comfort the broken, contrite heart, those weary of sin and troubled with afflictions. And because the Holy Spirit was upon him, he would speak as no man ever spoke. It was that same Divine influence which daily led him to pray, to preach the Gospel, and to fulfill the whole will of the Father.

Did you also notice how the speaker relies on God, the LORD? He relies on Jehovah, the supreme and only true God to teach him everything. Look what the Sovereign Lord, the one who rules over all things has done for the speaker. “*The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.*”

He puts all his confidence in the Lord, and has nothing but praise for the Lord. He begins this chapter in the verses before our text with a rebuke for the people of the Lord, whom he led like a child from Egypt and to whom he gave a land flowing with milk and honey, giving them every material possession they could ever

But his chosen people need more than earthly possessions. They need learning from the Lord God. And that he has done, just as he has done for us. Through God's prophets, and especially through Jesus Christ, ***"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back."*** (King James Version)

Those are exactly the kinds of things the Lord Jesus did when he was on earth. In addition to healing, he especially proclaimed the Word of God – especially the Gospel of salvation to those weary of their sins, to those who knew their sins and shortcomings before the Lord. And he listened to his heavenly Father and the Holy Scriptures. He did nothing independent from them.

2.

Despite the fact that this servant of God relies totally on God, he suffers. After all, suffering is what Jesus Christ came to earth to do. ***"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."*** This spells out in detail how God's Servant would suffer. The suffering Messiah was to endure beating, scourging, flogging, spitting, and the pulling of his beard. This ancient description of contempt is spelled out in all four Gospels.

In this passage the servant of the Lord clearly becomes the suffering servant. Jesus' sufferings are described here. For this servant, obedience meant that he would be beaten and humiliated. Isaiah describes the treatment criminals experienced in the ancient East. He was whipped. He was scourged. He was flogged. But the servant of the Lord willingly gave his back to those who struck him.

His beard would be torn out. In the ancient world, such treatment was a disgrace and humiliation but the servant willingly allowed this to take place because of his obedience to the Word of the Lord. The beard was a sign of respect; thus to pluck it out was a gesture of utter contempt. The eastern people always held the beard in great respect and reverence, and to pluck a man's beard is one of the grossest indignities that can be offered. One writer gave an instance of an Arab, who, having received a wound in his jaw, chose to risk his life rather than allow the surgeon to cut off his beard.

When he says ***"I hid not my face from shame and spitting"*** we see another instance of the utmost contempt. Throughout the East it is highly offensive to spit in any one's presence. Then it follows that spitting in the face would be one of the greatest possible indignities.

In the indignities heaped upon him, which would arouse a storm of indignation in any other human being, Jesus did not hide his face from shame and being spit upon. He accepted blasphemous words of mockery and actions of mockery and beating with the spirit of divine humility which characterized him throughout his sufferings.

This true Servant of the Lord gives total obedience, especially in the sufferings leading to his death.

3.

Look at where and how Jesus gets his confidence and hope: ***"Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. 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! It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up."***

The suffering of the servant is necessary, because it is part of God's plan, but he has learned and is confident that he will not be ashamed. He says ***"therefore have I set my face like a flint."*** He becomes like a great stone face, not giving in to any physical, mental, or spiritual abuse. He will meet all mockery with the conquering power of his unflinching will, and he assures us ***"I know I will not be put to shame."*** His vindication would finally be brought about. It is the Lord God who makes all things right, who vindicates him – the King James Version says ***"justified"*** him. His Father clears him of all accusations and guilt, justifies and provides support for him, and ultimately takes revenge on Satan and all his cohorts. Jesus' innocence was established and will be confirmed in the last great Judgment; He will suffer in order to accomplish his mission. So he says ***"I set my face like a flint"***, a hard stone. We must remember how resolutely Jesus took his last journey to Jerusalem to suffer and die. He told his disciples what would happen there, but the pain and death that he was expecting did not deter him. There is a sort of a defiance in the words of the servant here: who will accuse me? He's innocent of any sin. Yes, Jesus was defiant to all his mockery and suffering but he also lived

and died a life of willing obedience to the Words of the Lord. The Jews brought many false witnesses against Jesus, but they could find no evidence against him. Not one of the accusations stood the test of truth. He himself was sinless, but was punished for sinning.

The guilt and sin of all mankind was indeed laid upon him, but he was surely and always the Holy One of God, whom no man could convict of sin.

4.

Because Jesus has endured all this for us and earned our salvation we have hope and we can be encouraged. He asks ***“Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.”***

What marvelous words of comfort, both for Jesus and for us.

In the last verse of our text Isaiah addresses those who fear the Lord. Fear of the Lord is respect and honor for the God of free and faithful grace. The Lord has graciously promised deliverance from sin and death and hell to all who believe in Jesus, the Messiah as their only Savior from all their sins. This is speaking of the proper respect for his majesty, but not in slavish dread, just as we saw in the phrase ***“The Sovereign LORD.”***

Before God, all humans stand in absolute terror of the punishment they deserve because of their sins. It is God’s Law which instills that fear in us. But the Lord of free and faithful grace declared all sinners not guilty because of this great servant, the Messiah, God’s own son. That is the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Believers possess deep respect and awe for the Lord, and so they listen to and obey his word.

Those who show appropriate fear of the Lord prove it by listening to the Word of this great suffering servant. We too, need more than earthly possessions. We need learning from the Lord, which comes only through his Word.

The servant offers redemption, light, and victory for all humanity. He has already earned it. That’s why he asks the world to listen to him, as in the previous chapter of Isaiah: ***“Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations.”*** (Isaiah 49:1 New International Version)

All who fear the Lord and trust in the Word of the Lord’s servant will find deliverance, forgiveness, and life, eternal life. Jesus, God’s great servant has led us in trusting in the name of the Lord and relying upon God. All who are called to serve God can face adversity and persecution with confidence. Such confidence comes from listening to and learning from God. God helps his great servant – in fact, all his servants – in every distress and shows that they have good reason for confidence. Jesus lived out this servant role perfectly. He stands as a worthy model for all who seek to serve God.

Oh, Lord, let us, who have no light, ***“trust in the name of the LORD and rely on”*** the God who has called us to be his own. Amen.