

**Behold your suffering Savior**

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back.

<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 is he that 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 him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

-Isaiah 50:4-10

Wouldn't life be a lot easier if we could just go along with what the world thought and did? I think things could be easier for me and perhaps even more fun if I just went along with the crowd? Do you agree? Take gender and sexuality for a moment. Because of the presence of children, I will not get explicit. But... what if we could just say "live and let live?" What if we had no moral absolutes to stand upon? Wouldn't that make things easier? What about tied to partying and alcohol? Wouldn't life be easier if the teens and young adults of our congregation could just join in on the fun? They wouldn't be excluded, and a good time would be had. Wouldn't that make things easier? How about finances? Wouldn't life be easier if we didn't have to be honest? What if we could cut corners, lie, cheat, and steal to get ahead? The world does it! Wouldn't this make things easier for us? There are many examples in life in which life could be easier or more fun for us if we could just join in on the way of the world.

Do you ever have these thoughts? Now, we know that there is another side to that coin. God's laws are a blessing to us. They protect us from the difficulties that foolishness and sin bring. That being said, have you ever just wished you didn't need to deal with the difficulty that you may face?

The life of a Christian is not painless. The life of a Christian is not always easy. Do not let people deceive you into thinking otherwise. We know this is the case because Jesus told us so. Jesus told us that we would suffer. We see that he himself suffered too. **Behold your suffering Savior.**

Today, we meditate upon a portion of the book of Isaiah. In this section, we see the Messiah speak through the prophet. The Messiah, **your suffering Savior**, tells us how he diligently listened to the Word of the Lord. "*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 certainly did so. We can think of when Jesus, as a 12-year-old, sat diligently at the feet of his teachers to hear the word of the Lord. About this, Jesus said, "*Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?*" And Luke wrote, "*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*" (Luke 2:49, 52) Jesus listened to the Word. He listened to the message that foretold what he came to do. The message that spoke of his soon-to-come suffering. The message that spoke of his eventual, gruesome death. Jesus knew this word, and he was not rebellious.

The Messiah demonstrated that he was not rebellious to the message of the Word. He said, "*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.*" We know this was certainly fulfilled in the actions of Jesus. Think of what the Gospels stated about his suffering, "*Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him.*" (Matthew 26:67) and "*Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they slapped him in the face.*" (John 19:1-3) Jesus certainly faced this suffering and mockery. Notably, he faced

this willingly. He offered himself to this pain. He offered himself to this suffering. He willingly went forward to the cross. **Behold the suffering Savior.**

In Arizona, we are familiar with wildfires. We do what we can to avoid the suffering that such events can cause. When we go camping, we thoroughly put out the fire. When burning conditions are not right, we do not even start the fire. If a fire is raging, we get out of its path. We understand that fire can cause suffering, so we do what we can to avoid the suffering and pain. It seems natural to avoid suffering. That is why Jesus' actions are so striking. Jesus knew that the pain, suffering, and cross were coming. Yet, he faced suffering. **Behold that suffering Savior**; he suffered willingly.

Jesus did not avoid his suffering. Jesus tells us that as his people, we too will suffer. He said this in the Gospel today, "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*" (Mark 8:34) The cross is the suffering that we, as Christians, will and must suffer because of our relationship to Christ. How do you view this cross? Are you ashamed of it? Do you do what you can to avoid it? Think of the following scenarios:

Kids, everyone is joining in on picking on and making fun of a classmate because of her weight, style, or personality. Do you stand up for her? Do you place yourself in the potential situation of suffering by telling your peers to stop? Or do you avoid that pain? Perhaps, you just ignore it or even join in on the sin.

College students, it is Thursday night. All your friends are going to some house parties. You know that at those parties, there will be the temptation to overindulge in alcohol and partake in illegal drugs. What do you do? Do you choose to stay at your dorm because if you join in, you will at the very least be condoning their sinful actions? Do you face that potential loss of fun and friends? Or do you bring yourself into harm's way?

Everyone, as society's definitions of right and wrong become increasingly skewed. When you are told to advocate for sin or lie about people's identity or the reality of objective truths, what do you do? Do you stand for the truth? Do you stand for marriage, life, and morality? Perhaps, to avoid difficulty, you simply pander to the demands of secular society.

In all these scenarios, you may be tempted to flee from suffering for the sake of Christ. You may be ashamed of your cross. If so, not only are you sinning in those actions, but you are sinning by being ashamed of your cross. You are sinning in being ashamed of Jesus. If you are ashamed of Jesus, he will be ashamed of you when he returns in judgment. "*If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*" (Luke 9:26) Do not value comfortability in this life over eternity with Jesus.

So, how are you feeling? Have you been struck by the law of God? Have you been guilty of fleeing the cross that Christians bear? If so, **behold your suffering Savior.** Jesus was not ashamed to suffer. Jesus willingly faced this pain. He was spat upon. He was flogged. He was tortured. Jesus willingly faced this, and he did so for you. Jesus' suffering was greater than yours, and it was done for you. Here, we see Jesus' active and passive obedience. Jesus suffered in your place, and he did so willingly. Jesus faced the punishment that your sins deserved. In Christ Jesus, your sins are forgiven. He took them upon the cross, and he gave you, his perfection. "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" (2 Corinthians 5:21) Look to the cross of Christ, know that through His cross, you are forgiven for failing to embrace your cross. We do not teach a theology of glory, but you will experience the glory of heaven. Your suffering Savior was not disgraced. He was not put to shame. After facing this cross, He was raised to life. He won the victory. Then, he was seated at the right hand of the Father, where he lives and rules eternally. Yes, trust in the name of the Lord. Listen to the voice of His servant.

Living under the cross of Christ, you are free. You are free to embrace your cross. Why should cross or trial grieve me? You will face difficulties in this life. Sometimes, you will have to suffer for bearing the name of Christ. Embrace it. Will you lose out on the fun? Money? Friends? A job? Maybe! But, rejoice in it. You get to suffer for Jesus. You get to suffer for the one who loves you and suffered for you.

In times of trial, Jesus comes to you with "*an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary.*" Your suffering Savior says to you, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:28) He sends you the Holy Spirit to comfort you through the Word and Sacrament. He gives you assurance, rest, and the forgiveness of all or your sins. Yes, go to him, all you who are weary and burdened, for he has given you rest. Amen.