

LENT ACCORDING TO ISAIAH

Isaiah Sees Christ's Glorious Victory

To be a part of His victory look beyond the cross -- Look to his resurrection.

Isaiah 53:10-12

TEXT: *Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Tired of the presidential primary season? Can't wait until it's over? All the name-calling, the vitriolic speech, and the many promises that those of us who have been around for a few decades have learned to let those promises go in one ear and out the other?

But come November 8th it will be decided and the election process, as messy as it is, that is a mark of the great freedoms we enjoy as a nation, will be over. Christian citizens will overcome our disgust over the campaigning process and will obey our God by doing our civic duty and vote for the candidate we feel will best serve our nation. One will be elected president, and then we pray for unity.

Grand preparations are made for the president-elect's inauguration in January. There will be the grand entrance of the man chosen to swear before the nation and the world to guard and protect the Constitution of the United States of America. There will be inaugural parties and grand balls.

But then, the next day, the real work begins. And for us, that work continues to be to pray our gracious Lord to forgive us our sins, help us to return to God's ways, and to bless us so that we may live in peace and continue to proclaim the greater kingdom to which we belong: the Kingdom of God!

So often, however, we find ourselves disappointed with the leaders that have been elected. Their grand promises are slow to being implemented, if they are implemented at all. So it was 2000 years ago when Jesus of Nazareth rode into Jerusalem to the cheers of the Jewish people. They cried out: ***Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!*** Jn 12 But by Friday, the Jews called for his crucifixion. The Jews protested the sign that Pontius Pilate posted over Jesus' cross: ***Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*** They wanted Pilate to change it to read that Jesus SAID he was king of the Jews. Pilate, however, knew their evil jealousy and stood firm. Jesus is the King! For those Jews who did put their hope in Jesus, their hopes were dashed. Even his disciples went into hiding for fear.

But through the eyes of faith, Christ's crucifixion is a glorious battle that ends in glorious victory. This is what the ancient prophet Isaiah also saw. He sees Christ's glorious victory. To be part of this victory, we must look beyond the cross and look to Christ's resurrection.

To be a part of His victory look beyond the cross as Isaiah does: ... ***it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied...*** The guilt offering of guilt offerings is that offering that takes away the sin of the world. It is the blood of God paying for the sins of all humanity. This means that there is peace and reconciliation between God and all humanity. There is forgiveness of sins for all humanity. Not just for the few who believe in him as some false teachers still teach today, but for ALL. ***God was in Christ reconciling the WORLD to himself, not counting men's sins against them.*** 2 Co 5

Palm Sunday is a day that only Christians can understand because it is a mixture of the emotions of Lent and Easter. It is a joyous triumphant celebration only if we are able to look beyond the horror of Good Friday to the joy of Easter. There are people who actually wonder why we call Good Friday "good" when our Lord is crucified. They are like those who joined in cheering Jesus, the great miracle worker who healed the sick, raised the dead and fed the 5000, as their king. These people are still around today.

But we have to confess that we Christians also are just like that when we call Jesus our king but live lives contrary to what our king wants of us. Our own pitiful sinful condition is totally corrupt so that when we

praise Jesus it is with hearts that still harbor all manner of covetousness, greed, lust, and anger. Our worship is often superficial and with minds that wander. Our King Jesus rides right by us on his way to the cross and we go right back to our sinful ways as surely as a dog returns to his own vomit. Peter says that the proverbs are true: ***A dog returns to its vomit, and, A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.*** 2 Pe 2 Paul's own confession of his sinful nature ends in the agonizing cry: ***What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*** Ro 7

Nevertheless, our King rides on past us to the cross where Isaiah sees victory: ***Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; ...*** Jesus will "see his offspring.... Jesus will see the light of life... This means that Jesus will live and have children. He will by the power of God's Holy Spirit have "children of God." These children will be, as Jesus himself declares, children born of water and the Spirit. Paul says it like this in Galatians: ***You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*** Ga 3 Clothed with Christ's righteousness, and sin paid for by Jesus the "guilt offering" of God, we are sin and guilt-free before God our Redeemer.

Look beyond the cross, says Isaiah. Look to Christ's resurrection!

...by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. "By his knowledge" means to know this and to believe it. That brings us to Easter, the Day of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. For 40 days our Lord would continue to walk this earth among his disciples, proving that he was indeed alive. But then, on day 40, Jesus would ascend triumphantly to take his throne at the right hand of God. From this position of almighty power Jesus continues to rule his Church, overseeing the spread of the Gospel throughout the world, sending his Holy Spirit through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, calling, gathering, enlightening and sanctifying his Elect from all four corners of the world. Here is the victory that is seen beyond the cross and his resurrection. This is what Isaiah sees when he writes: ***Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.***

But does it work? It has with you! The water of Baptism that once touched and wetted you, the bread and wine of Jesus' holy Supper that still feeds you, these precious promises continue to guard and keep you in the one true faith of the Gospel of Jesus' guilt-offering once made on the cross for the sins of the world. Therefore, there awaits the division of the spoils of this war with Satan who destroyed this world. The spoils of this war will be given you and enjoyed forever in heaven.

But first, our Lord tells us that before we get to enjoy the spoils of war, we will bear our own crosses here on this earth as we live to serve our King in whatever way he calls us to serve him. We bear the cross and crosses he lovingly chooses for us to bear in his name. We do this as Isaiah teaches us, that we look beyond the cross to the victory the resurrection.

This we can do as countless faithful Christians have done before us! Amen.