

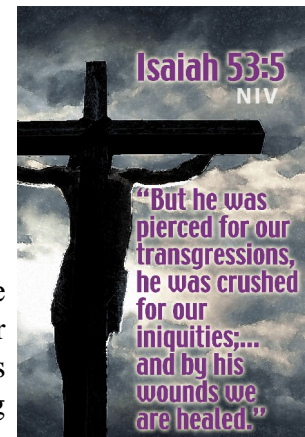
## Good Friday

**Text: Isaiah 53:5**

By His wounds we are healed

Theme: The Wounds that Heal

A number of years ago we were at my mom's house for Easter dinner. There was a program on channel 30 on the passion of our Lord. I remember watching one of my children watch that rather mild account of our Lord's passion, and I thought that they were going to cry. It was not an easy thing for a child to see.



To be honest, I have never watched the "Passion of the Christ." I started to watch it one day and just was not able to finish watching it. It was like watching my best friend be brutalized.

Every year for 6 weeks leading up to Easter, we meditate on the passion of our Lord. Generally we think of His physical suffering. We remember how the guards put the crown of thorns on His head, how they struck Him on the head with a staff, and how they spit in his face. We remember the nails that were pounded through His hands and feet. He was naked and a bloody mess as He hung on the cross. He was weak and in horrible pain. When you think about his suffering, it makes you feel sick to your stomach.

This year we took a little different track. We thought of the emotional wounds that Jesus bore, the wounds of betrayal, apathy, denial, mockery, and abandonment. Many of these wounds were even deeper than the physical wounds.

There is value for us to consider all of the wounds of our Lord in His passion, both the physical and emotional, because it is those wounds of Christ that have healed us and made us whole.

I. As Christ suffered on the cross, He was bearing all the sin of the world.

Our sin made us worthy of everything that Jesus suffered on the cross. When you consider what He suffered, realize that it is what we should have suffered. We just sang in the hymn, "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted,"

**Ye who think of sin but lightly, nor suppose the evil great**

**Here may view its nature rightly, Here its guilt may estimate.**

Jesus suffered our punishment on the cross. For three hours He was at the mercy of the devil. The devil showed Him no mercy. He found every possible way to bring horrible suffering to Jesus.

Christ's whole life was love. He cast out demons, healed the sick, and even raised the dead. He forgave the sins of the worst of sinners. But His greatest act of love was what He did on this cross. He was not suffering for even one of His own sins. As Isaiah writes, "*The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*" "*He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.*" He bore the punishment for all of our sins on that cross.

There are two things that we come to realize when we consider Christ's suffering. The first is that we see just how serious our sin is. The suffering of Christ on the cross is what hell is like. We see what our sins deserved. On the other hand, we see the tremendous love of God, that Christ would take the punishment for our sins on Himself, so that we could be clothed with His righteousness. He jumped right into the jaws of death and hell in our place, so that when we die, it will be the gate of eternal life rather than everlasting punishment. His innocent death in our place is what heals the wound of all of our sins.

II. There are only two responses that people can have to His suffering.

The first is to despise and reject Him. In verse 3 Isaiah writes, "*He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised and we esteemed Him not.*" The passion story is full of people who despised and rejected Christ. It began with one of His own disciples who betrayed Him. The High Priest condemned Him for blasphemy. Then all the priests condemned Him. They spit on Him, blindfolded Him, and struck Him with their fists. When the Lord was taken to Pilate, the crowd called for His crucifixion. In order to satisfy the crowd, Pilate sentenced our Lord to death. After He was whipped, the soldiers mocked Him. While He was crucified, the chief priests, those who passed by, and even those who were crucified with Jesus, heaped insults on Him.

The sad fact is that Christ is still despised and rejected today. There are small things. It was not very long ago that stores were closed from noon until 3 on Good Friday. How many stores were closed today? Even sports doesn't acknowledge Good Friday anymore. Thousands of people spent the day drinking at the baseball stadium today for opening day right during that time. As I have learned, even youth sports doesn't take a break for Good Friday. But there are even bigger things. People don't seem to mind if you talk about God today, but they don't like to hear about Jesus. There is something about the name of Jesus that sets people off. He did the most loving thing ever. While everyone was mocking and insulting Him and challenging Him to come down from the cross, He stayed on that cross to bear all of our sins. He even prayed that His Father would forgive them. Yet, so many people despise His name today. He and His suffering are still mocked and rejected today, just as 2,000 years ago.

The other response is to see Him as our Savior. One of the most intriguing things about Jesus passion is the confession of the centurion. He had probably been there the whole time. He was there when Jesus was condemned by Pilate. He was probably one of the guards that mocked the Lord. He was in charge of the crucifixion. He saw it all. Yet, when the Lord was hanging dead on the cross, he confessed, "*Surely, this man was the Son of God!*" He looked up and he saw his Savior.

That is whom we see whenever we contemplate the Lord's passion. The 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of the hymn "Jesus, I Will Ponder Now" says,

**Make me see Your great distress, Anguish and affliction  
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness And Your crucifixion  
Make Me see how scourge and rod, Spear and nails did wound You,  
How You died for those, O God, Who with thorns had crowned You."**

When we consider the Lord's Passion, we see that He died for us. There are times when the devil

plagues us in life. He plays the part of satan, the accuser. He reminds us of the worst things that we have done and he never lets us forget them. He brings regret and guilt. He mocks us, "And you call yourself a Christian!" But the worst of those experiences will be at the hour of our death. I will never forget a woman that the devil tormented in the last weeks of her life. She would tell me over and over that she was wicked and had no chance of heaven. She was a pious, Christian woman as long as I knew her, but the devil put her eyes in the wrong place. They were on herself and not on Christ.

When the devil accuses us and reminds us how evil and wicked we are, it is important that we take our eyes off of ourselves and see Christ giving His life for us. We fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.

This lenten season our theme has been based on Paul Gerhardt's hymn "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." The last verse of that hymn says,

**Remind me of Thy passion When my last hour draws nigh.  
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee, Upon Thy cross shall dwell  
My heart by faith enfold Thee. Who dieth thus dies well.**

When we contemplate the suffering and death of our Savior in faith, it brings peace to our troubled souls in this life. Especially at the time of our death, it will bring the peace to know that by His wounds we are healed. We will meditate on His love and redemption for us and suddenly see Him in the glory that He has won for us.

May God enable us to meditate on Christ's passion for us in faith, that we may see our salvation on that cross and thank and praise Him for taking our sins and clothing us with His righteousness. It is truly by His wounds that we are healed.

Amen.

**Pastor Don Hougard  
Benediction Lutheran Church  
Milwaukee, WI  
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