

“The Lord’s Salvation”

Isaiah 49:1-7

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Here, in Isaiah’s second song of the Lord’s Suffering Servant, the Messiah is foretold to be the Lord’s salvation. It is He who will redeem His people, the true Israel, and bring light into the world, as we discussed last week. The promised Holy One of the Lord is not coming only to save the Jews. The weight of His task is so much greater. He comes to save all people—to be the Lord’s salvation to “the end of the earth.” In other words, His atonement that He will bring about for God’s people is universal. It is for all mankind, and by faith it is appropriated to those who are children of God.

In our sinful state, we are those who must be brought back and gathered unto the Lord. It is for sinful man that Jesus was incarnated and became the Lord’s servant, and He comes for the purpose of gathering those who are lost. As Jesus says in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Our sin would have us be lost if not for the work of the Suffering Servant. We are not capable of doing that which is described for us here by Isaiah. The sinful flesh will simply not allow it. It seeks not the things of God’s righteousness, but the things of the devil—the things of this world. And it is those things that lead us away from the safety and comfort of our Lord’s salvation.

Our fallen state is one that must be daily put in its place, as Luther says, we must drown that old man in the remembrance of our baptisms, that the new man may arise from those blessed waters. But what that means is that we have to constantly battle it. We constantly have to battle the temptation to sin, and thus continually do that which is not pleasing to our God. While we live in the flesh, we will over and over again fail in pleasing our Heavenly Father. We labor in vain when we seek to resolve this on our own because it can come to nothing as we incessantly return to sin and the things of this world.

This isn’t a new and novel idea that sin lurks about in the world seeking our demise. It’s what Peter writes about in 1 Peter 5:8, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Satan puts sin in our path to weaken our faith, and give him the opening he needs in order to devour God’s people. His every whim is bent on disrupting the salvific plan of God, but the good news for the Christian is that he has already failed at that, and he cannot overcome the One who fights for you.

God Himself, in the person of His only begotten Son, fights for you. Jesus is the polished arrow that is hidden in the quiver that God uses for His divine purpose. He has been chosen for that very task, because it is in Him that God will be glorified. His mouth is like a sharp sword, pointing us to our defense against the onslaught of the devil. His Word is our weapon. This should no doubt call to mind Hebrews 4:12, “For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.” Jesus is the embodiment of the Word, the very Word made flesh, and so He is the one who goes forth in battle to bring us home to our loving God. And He did this through means of His own suffering, death, and burial.

As the arrow of the Lord, He was sent to redeem His people on the cross. That is where the fulfillment of this prophecy takes place. Through His death on Calvary, He has become the Lord’s salvation that reaches to the end of the earth. There upon that tree He will be deeply despised and abhorred by the nation, the very ones He has come into the world to save. His own people will place Him there, and we are among those who have. Not in the same sense as the Jews who cried out for His crucifixion, but because of our sin and wretchedness for which He went there.

He didn’t just go to the cross and die so that our sins would be as if they never existed. He went to the cross shouldering the burden of our sins. Our sins have not been negated; they have been taken from us by our Lord and Savior. He confesses those sins as if they were His own and takes the punishment for them in our place. They are not just wiped away; they are paid for in full. The punishment for our sins is just and His willingness to take them upon Himself and confess them as His own makes His right with the Lord, and His recompense with God.

And it is God who receives the glory. Jesus, though God in the flesh, does not ever point to Himself as He is glorified in His death. All glory is always given to God. This is evident in Psalm 22, where Jesus is pictured as one who is the most helpless one can be, and yet he never gives up hope in His Heavenly Father. When all is accomplished, it is not, “Look at what I have done,” but, “Look at what God has done for you.” He has come to accomplish the victory over sin and death which we cannot. Because of the faithfulness of the Lord’s servant, we have been redeemed and brought into the light of His grace. Our sermon hymn captures this extremely well in its closing verse:

O my God, my Rock and Tower,
Grant that in Thy death I trust,
Knowing Death has lost his power

Since Thou trodd'st him in the dust.
Savior, let Thine agony
Ever help and comfort me;
When I die be my Protection,
Light and Life and Resurrection.

The Lord's salvation certainly comes to us by His grace, but most specifically, it comes to us by His grace in Jesus Christ. Through the blood of His only begotten Son, we have been saved from eternal death and the power of the devil. The corruption of our flesh in this life will one day be cleansed, and we will no longer face the duality of Christian living. We will have the fulfillment of what Christ has secured for us by His death, and the perfection of His glorious presence will keep us holy for eternity. There is no need to fear kings, princes, and nations, for they will all prostrate themselves before the servant of the Lord, who is the Messiah—our Lord Jesus Christ. He has called back the “preserved of Israel,” the true Church. He has given the Lord's salvation to mankind, and He has given you the faith which receives that blessed gift. In this penitential Lenten season, repent, but do not lose sight of the forgiveness He freely gives. He is the Lord's salvation, and as such, salvation is yours by His grace and for His sake alone. Amen.