

“The One with Ears to Hear”

Isaiah 50:4-9

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We’ve come now to what is known as the third song of the Lord’s Suffering Servant. This song is all about the obedience of God’s servant as He takes what the Lord has given Him and does what He has been sent to do. And along the way, as He does the will of the Father, He will have to face ridicule and suffering. But even that will not deter Him from fulfilling the purpose of the Lord, and no amount of resistance from the adversary will find success. Because He is acting according to the divine will. He has not, and will never, turn backward from that to which the Lord has opened His ear. This Servant is indeed the one with ears to hear, and He has set His face like a flint as He goes to the cross for the redemption of the world.

In the Gospels, Jesus frequently uses the phrase, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” He says this when speaking about realities of faith, and when explaining fulfillment of prophecy. The important connection is that Jesus is Himself the object of faith and prophecy. And here in Isaiah, He is the object of the Lord’s communication. We are getting an “inside look,” as it were, into the divine communication between the Father and the Son. We are seeing the divine knowledge being delivered to Jesus in His human nature by the divine nature. As the only begotten Son of God, His will is one with the Father’s, and that is because of the communication of the entire person of Jesus—2 natures, one person.

He alone is able to do what Isaiah describes here. All knowledge has been given to Him. He is the omniscient Lord in the flesh, and so He has been given the tongue of those who are taught. But not for the benefit of His own knowledge. As I said, He already knows all things. It is for us that He is given such a tongue, that He may sustain with a word those who are weary. Our sinful flesh desires itself to have that knowledge and ability. Adam and Eve gave into the temptations of Satan seeking the ability to be like God. They became reliant on themselves instead of remaining reliant on the one who created them. Isaiah says here that the Lord’s Servant is entirely reliant upon being given that which He knows.

The communication between the Father and Son is an ongoing thing. It is not like a download of information, but a constant stream of information. Morning by morning God awakens the ear of His Servant that He may know the will of His Father and act upon it. His acting upon God’s will is for a singular purpose—the salvation of God’s

people. He heard the Lord's will, having had His ear opened to it, and He obeyed that which He heard. He did not turn His back or rebel against the Lord. Jesus does precisely this at Gethsemane when He prays to the Father in Luke 22:42, "Father if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done." And we pray the same thing in the Lord's Prayer. Luther says this in His Large Catechism on the Third Petition:

So there is just as great a need, as in all the other petitions, that we pray without ceasing, "Dear Father, Your will be done, not the devil's will or our enemies' or anything that would persecute and suppress Your holy Word or hinder Your kingdom. Grant that we may bear with patience and overcome whatever is to be endured because of Your Word and kingdom, so that our poor flesh may not yield or fall away because of weakness or sluggishness."

In humble obedience to His Father's will, He gave His "back to those who strike and His face to those who pull out the beard." The Servant is willing to suffer for the will of God to be achieved. He is willing to endure physical pain and suffering as people strike Him and rip at His face, because it is for the goal of thwarting the devil's will and desires. While any of you men with beards would certainly understand how much it would hurt to have your beard ripped out, there is more to this than just physical pain. During Biblical times, it was a sign of disgrace to have one's beard ripped out. It was often a punishment for doing something shameful and the one who is punished is seen as the least among them. Which is why Isaiah continues with the fact that the Lord's called Servant did not hide his face, but faced the disgrace and spitting head on.

In the same way that the Servant turns his face toward disgrace, Jesus turns His face toward Jerusalem and the cross. That tree of Jesus' shame is where He would hang in seeming disgrace for the sins of the whole world. An act that He would complete without hesitation in accord with the will of His Father in heaven, succumbing to being beaten, spat upon, flogged, and crucified. It would seem that there is no joy to be had in the face of such disgrace and denigration. And if it were just an ordinary man hanging in such disgrace, indeed there would be none. But He is the Son of God, the Lamb of salvation, who has come to atone for the sins of the whole world. Even in the face of being forsaken by His Father, the Lord of all things is not without the hope of salvation for His people.

For the Lord God is His help, just as He is ours. Because of the help of the Lord, who takes His sacrifice as an acceptable offering for sin, there is no disgrace for the Servant. He will be vindicated when His death comes, and when He is raised from the

dead by the will of the Father. No one can contend with Him, and He shall not be put to shame, for He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. He has come to disarm the devil and destroy the power of sin and death. No one and nothing can be His adversary, so bring them on. Because of His vicarious atonement, He has set His face like a flint against the world and its sinfulness.

By our baptism into His death, we too have a face like a flint because it is Christ who now dwells in us that gives us the strength to take on the attacks of the devil and this sinful world. No matter what trials and struggles we go through in this life, we are not the suffering servant of the Lord, but we have the Servant who suffered for us by our side through all things. We are not disgraced for the Lord God is our help, and for His sake alone no one can declare us guilty. We will not wither and fade, because eternal life awaits us as a child of God. Jesus Christ, in His glorified body will never wear out, and when we too receive the gift of the glory of heaven, we will no longer have to face the moths that eat up the unbelieving world.

We have the promise of His Word to carry us through until that day—the Word which Jesus has brought into the world to sustain our weary souls. Daily He awakens our ear, and imparts the knowledge of His revelation to us by His Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus is the One who has ears to hear the will of His Father, we too have been given ears to hear the truth of His salvation. We have been given faith in Christ, and that is our treasured possession. Through the hearing of His Holy Word our faith is strengthened and grown, and the devil, the world, and all that opposes our God will come to nothing before our Savior. Jesus heard the will of His Father and obeyed without hesitation. His ears were opened to the truth of what He must do to redeem the world, and our ears have been opened to the completion of His task. He has redeemed the world by His blood, and we are those who will dwell with Him in eternity, forever one with His will in the perfection of His holy presence. Amen.