

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us this evening is found in the book of the prophet Isaiah beginning in the fifty-second chapter at the thirteenth verse:

Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. ¹⁴ Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; ¹⁵ So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.

53:1 Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of

dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. ³ He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. ⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare

His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. ⁹ And they made His grave with the wicked-- But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. ¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Mourners at the Death of our Savior,

Today is Good Friday and yet after reading a text like that one has to ask, what is so good about it? After greeting us as “mourners at the death of our Savior,” what is so good about that? Knowing that Jesus Christ, the only One who is both God and man, died today... what is so good about that?

And yet, though there is much to be troubled at, there is still good to be found on Good Friday. However all of the good must be taken with a very bitter pill. For on this day, in Jerusalem, there was not born for us a child... no, there was killed for us a man; yes, God Himself died today. So, while we

may find solace in the fact that Jesus Christ died... maybe we should find some discomfort and agony in the fact that Jesus Christ died for me.

As Isaiah tells us, “***He was despised, and we did not esteem Him... He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for OUR transgressions, He was bruised for OUR iniquities...***” This is what happened to our Lord and Savior today. Yes, on this Good Friday, let us always remember that Jesus was ***stricken, smitten, and afflicted***.

So, tonight, let us begin with a simple exercise.: anyone who has sinned please stand up. Now that we are all standing, anyone who has sinned today please raise your hand. Now I want you to look to your left and to your right... everyone that has

their hand raised has helped kill Jesus. *You can sit down.*

It sounds so callous and cold, does it not? And yet, is that not what each and every one of us has done every time we break God’s holy law? Looking at the commandments of God and realizing that even this day, the day on which your Savior died, you have not been a perfect Christian.

Have no other gods... nope. Honor your father and mother and thus all in authority... nope. Do not kill and by Christ’s own words do not hate... nope. And that is only three. And every time we break a commandment we are helping drive those nails into our Savior all the more.

Honoring someone or something more than God, something that we all do to money, friends, family, possessions (POUND). Coveting our neighbor’s wife or husband or

his possessions (POUND). Lying about or not putting the best construction on something that someone says or does (POUND). All of these and more are just one more nail strike into our Savior's hands and feet.

Or maybe we don't like to think about Jesus being nailed to a cross... that might be a little too gruesome for us. Okay, we'll use an example from a church father... every time we sin, it is as if we are tying all the tighter the whip used to scourge our Savior.

Cursing another person to hell for something that they do to you innocently, and it makes the whip all the tighter and sting all the more. Going to those websites and looking at those images, makes the whip that much tighter and sting that much more. Cheating on your spouse whether physically or emotionally, makes the whip that much tighter and sting that much more.

As Johann Gerhard preached, *“If our hearts were not so completely cold, we would contemplate the trouble we made for our Lord with our sins and how each of us individually helped to braid this whip and scourge Christ. And since Christ took upon Himself a severe whipping we would also [if we were not so cold-hearted] patiently accept the chastisements with which God at times afflicts us. But since God punished His own dead Son in this manner for sins [not His own] which He has taken upon Himself, those upon whom the scourging of Christ is lost [who do not appreciate its meaning] and those who also by their deliberate sins continually afflict new scourgings on Christ should see in this mirror how God the Lord will someday harshly visit upon the unrepentant sinners their own sins.”*

And yet, how many of us continue in deliberate sin? How many of us know the events of Good Friday and yet still continue to sin? How many of us know what happened to Jesus: the beatings, the trial, the lies, the betrayal, the hanging... and yet we continue to sin?

Yes, today is Good Friday... but why on earth would we, who know our Savior's life story consider it good? We are the ones who put Him up on that cross. We are the ones who took the whip and made it all the tighter and sting all the more for when He was punished for us. We, who though we know all that happened to Him, still continue to sin and so dishonor Him. Why on earth would we consider it good? For again as Gerhard says, "***our evil thoughts are the crown of thorns which pricked and struck Christ; our sinful words are the spit which splattered on Christ's face; our evil deeds are the whips with which Christ was***

scourged;" does that make you feel good? Does that make you proud?

And though we know the sin that we commit, all we can do is imagine the agony and pain it caused our Savior. And yet dear friends, we need to remember one thing... Jesus suffered all of this willingly and for us.

Just as Isaiah reminds us, "***He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth.***" In fact, Jesus told Pilate on this Good Friday that if He wanted to He could have legions of angels who would not allow this to happen... and it did.

Jesus Christ came into this world as a child, born in a mean and lowly manger. He grew up and reached adulthood only to have His brothers call what He said into question and not believe in Him. His own town disowned Him. When His final days came He was taken captive on false charges, He was

beaten, He was mocked, He was found guilty for proclaiming the truth, He was whipped, He had thorns jammed into His head, He had to carry a wooden cross on His already ripped open flesh, He was then nailed to the cross where He was mocked, and He died. All of this Jesus suffered for you. Just as Isaiah told us, “***But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.***”

Yes, friends, by His stripes we are healed. On this Good Friday, we need to take time to remember our great and many sins and what they caused. It is on Good Friday that we see the ultimate consequence of our sin... we see the death of our Savior, we see God's death. And yet we know that He did this for us. And we know that in a few short days we will be gathering together to praise Him for coming back from the dead to assure me,

that through faith in all that Jesus has done, I have heaven waiting also.

Dear friends in Christ, Jesus was stricken, smitten, and afflicted for us... and it is through this that all of our sins were atoned for. If Christ did not suffer and die there would be no redemption and there would be no reconciliation with God our heavenly Father.

You see, Jesus had to die... and yes we had a hand in it. However, I pray that we can take some time and truly evaluate all the ways in which we sin... and in any way possible, stop. Instead of sinning we can focus on our Savior and all that He has done for us. We can focus on the cross and know that our Redeemer died there, and He died there for me. We can know that Jesus, though He died, will rise again.

Thanks be to God for sending a Savior who lived, suffered, and died for me. Thanks be to God for allowing me to see the consequence of my sins, so that through faith I can amend my ways. And thanks be to God that for the sake of the entire world Jesus was stricken, smitten, and afflicted... to redeem us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.