

Immanuel Lutheran Mail Ministry



Isaiah 50:4-10 *The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. ⁵ The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward. ⁶ I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. ⁷ But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. ⁸ He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. ⁹ Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. ¹⁰ Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*

Have you ever been in a car with a newly permitted, 15-year-old driver behind the wheel? It's not the most relaxing experience. It doesn't really matter how intelligent the 15-year-old is, or how well you know them, when an inexperienced driver gets behind the wheel, it can be an uncomfortable trip.

Experience is very important to us. The joke for college graduates on the job hunt is that every entry-level job requires 5+ years of experience. Right or wrong, we simply tend to side with those who have experience, those who've been there before and gone through the growing pains. Imagine going in for major surgery, and in your pre-op visit with the surgeon, he said, "I think I can do it, although, I've never done this procedure before." You might start looking for other options.

Now, what does this have to do with our text? The first verse of our text speaks about those who are "**Weary**." Perhaps you have been feeling weary lately. Perhaps you've been going through some pain in your life, facing various challenges, and it feels like you're all alone in it. Where do you turn? Who could possibly understand? You could vent about your weariness to a close friend, but chances are they won't know what to say other than, "I'm sorry that happened to you." Because, chances are, they haven't gone through what you're going through. No, in those times, you want a person who's been there before, who's experienced the same pain and gone through similar trials. That's the type of person that could really help!

If this is you, wearied by life, feeling like there's no one that can relate, I've got good news for you. In the words of our theme:

Trust in the LORD—He's Been There Before

I. He's been where you've been

I. He's been where you won't be

This section of Isaiah is the 3rd of what we call the Four Servant Songs. There are four different sections in the second half of Isaiah in which Isaiah either speaks as the mouth of Jesus or speaks about Jesus—namely, how He would suffer as the Servant of Jehovah. The most familiar of these

sections is Isaiah 53, which many of us know very well: ***“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed. . . . He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.”*** (Isaiah 53:5ff) Those words are very familiar because we read them each Lent. There, Isaiah is *clearly* speaking about Jesus and foretelling His final hours on His march to the cross. And our text before us today is very similar to that. But rather than speaking *about* Jesus, God gives us a first-person narrative through Isaiah, as Isaiah speaks the very words of Jesus. So, as we read through this section, remember that this is Jesus talking.

Verse 4. ***“The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.”*** Notice the parallel phrases at the beginning and end of those verses, Jesus says He’s been given, ***“The tongue of those who are taught,”*** and the ***“ear to hear those who are taught.”***

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone who was talking about something they clearly didn’t know much about? Kind of a rhetorical question, since we’ve all been in those types of conversations, perhaps we’ve even been the ones talking without much knowledge on the subject. You can really only speak on subjects which you’ve learned a lot about, otherwise, you’re going to be exposed pretty quickly as not being able to speak intelligently on the subject.

In that same vein, Jesus notes here that He has a tongue which is able to teach *because* He has ears which have been taught. Sometimes we might forget about the learning aspect of Jesus’ life. When He came to earth, He was certainly true God, but He was also true man and set aside some of His powers of God for a time. So, in order to teach us, in order to have a word to sustain those who are weary, first, He had to learn. In verse 4, Jesus says this learning process happened morning by morning throughout his life. In verse 5, He says, ***“The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.”*** Part of that learning process was studying His own Word. We see this when He was 12 years old and in the temple, learning and asking questions of the scribes and teachers.

But His learning process was not restricted to studying the Old Testament. In the book of Hebrews, we’re told, ***“We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”*** (Hebrews 4:15) Part of Jesus’ learning process involved suffering through the *same* trials that you and I have. He experienced loss. He was in discouraging situations. He knew the affect of sickness and hardship. He felt sorrow at the death of a loved one. AND He knew what it was like to struggle with very difficult temptation. And because He learned all these things, He is very qualified to speak on them.

So, do you find yourselves wearied? Do you come to church and look forward to forgetting about the stresses of daily life? If that describes you, then you’re exactly where you need to be. Because maybe you don’t have any friends who can understand or relate to your personal struggles, but Jesus understands. **He’s been there before. He’s one you can trust, because He’s been where you’ve been.** And most importantly, **He’s been where you won’t be.**

Picking up at verse 6. ***“I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the***

beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.” Clearly, when we read this verse, we understand it’s a prophecy about Jesus. Though Isaiah was writing these words some 700 years before Christ, when we read them, we can see them as a play-by-play description of everything that Jesus would actually suffer during His crucifixion. But when you consider Jesus reading the Old Testament, studying these words as a child, He also knew that they were being written about His passion. When He read in Isaiah 53 about a man being led like a sheep to the slaughtering house, He knew who that man was. Or these verses: striking the back, spitting on the face—Jesus knew these were the pains He would suffer on Good Friday. When He woke up morning by morning to study Scripture and turned to a section like Psalm 22, ***“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.”*** (Psalm 22:1-2) He knew the pain that was coming both from mankind and in relation to His Father in heaven, but He did not turn aside from His mission.

In verse 7, we read, ***“But the Lord GOD heals me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint.”*** I love that picture. Jesus knew what was coming, but He set His jaw firmly, determined to go through everything He’d read. And in the Gospel of Luke, we see this happening in real time, where we read, ***“And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem.”*** (Luke 9:51)

Remember High School, when the end of the school year was right around the corner? You could smell the excitement in the air, but you knew that before you were able to enjoy summer, you had to make it through your end of the year exams. There’s joy right around the corner, but you have to navigate through some unenjoyable times first to get there. That’s just a small taste of what Jesus experienced. There was joy out there before Him! The joy of being able to spend eternity in paradise with those whom He loved the most: you and me. But He also knew the unenjoyable pains that He would have to navigate first along the way. And so He set His face like a flint, walking resolutely into Jerusalem, knowing that He’d next be walking out under the weight of a cross and then carried to a stranger’s tomb. All of this Jesus suffered willingly, because He had come to bring you comfort, to sustain you with a word when you are weary.

You know, when we are suffering, when we’re weary, we usually don’t pay much attention to what someone says to us unless they’ve been through it themselves. When we lose a loved one, and people say things like, “It’s going to be ok,” or, “I know how you feel,” at least our internal reaction tends to discredit them, and we think, “You have no idea how I feel!” Well, Jesus suffered more than any, He’s been what you’ve been through, and He’s endured pain and suffering that we can’t even imagine. And He knows just how tired you are. Weary of the constant struggle to be good enough, to turn away from sin, the same sin we find ourselves slipping into day after day. Weary of trying to keep a marriage together. Weary of working so much and yet feeling like the end is never in sight. Jesus understands your weariness, and He’s here to offer a comforting Word. He invites you, ***“Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*** (Matthew 11:28) These are not empty words to simply discredit. For Jesus offers real rest and peace, and it’s tied to the next few verses of our text.

“I know that I shall not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me?

Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. Remember again that this is Jesus talking. He's speaking as the Suffering Servant hanging on the cross, and although He knew all that was coming, there He hangs saying, "Bring it on." Bring on the suffering, the spitting, pull out my beard. Bring on the weight of the world and the sin of mankind. Bring on the grave! Why? Because He knew that He would not be put to shame! He knew that His death on the cross was not the end. His resurrection would be the ultimate "Gotcha!" moment.

And these are beautiful words to wearied Christians. The Apostle Paul quotes these exact verses in his letter to the Romans, but instead of applying them to Jesus, he actually speaks about them being true of you and me. ***"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."*** (Romans 8:33-34) In Isaiah, Jesus is speaking about His own vindication, how God the Father the Father justified Him. For when God raised Jesus from the dead, He was saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. He will not be put to shame." And when the Father says that about Jesus, He's also saying that about you! For everyone who's been baptized into Christ has put on Christ! Everyone who has faith in Christ Jesus as their Savior is now united with Him!

So all of these phrases that Jesus speaks throughout our text, they're your words as well. ***"I know that I shall not be put to shame. He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? . . . Who is my adversary? . . . Behold, the Lord GOD helps me."*** These are your words too. You can have that same, "Bring it on," attitude of Jesus. Yes, there will be suffering, yes, you will be wearied. But through Jesus, we still have reason to say, "Bring it on." As the final verse of our text proclaims, ***"Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on His God."***

If you walked into church weary this morning, feeling the weight of the world on your shoulders in a way that no one else could understand. If you have found yourself walking in darkness lately, turn to Jesus. He will deliver you as well. And He understands. He's been there before, He's shared your experiences, and He has the Words you need to hear. Trust in the Lord! In Jesus' name. Amen.

"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7) Amen.

Pastor Sam Rodebaugh
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