

MID-WEEK MESSAGE April 7, 2020

Pine Bluffs United Methodist Church

Dear Friends, Here we are –about to the mid-point of Holy Week. In our Lenten journey we are caught between the Hosannas/Crucify Him of Palm Sunday and the Hallelujahs of Easter Sunday. But in between—Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Since I can't be with you for these observances I would like to use this opportunity to give you a short message for Good Friday: "The Suffering, Sacrificing, Saving Servant." Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

*"He was a man despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."* Isaiah 53:3-6

"Behold, my servant," says the Lord. Yes, behold him today. Behold the servant of the Lord serving in a most unexpected way: serving by suffering. Today on this Good Friday we behold Jesus Christ, the Lord's faithful, righteous servant, suffering a death he doesn't deserve. But because he does, you will receive what you don't deserve. And that is the good news of the Good Friday.

Jesus is the suffering servant. He is the sacrificing servant. And because he is, Jesus is also the saving servant. He saves you from sin and death. He saves you and puts you right with God. "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous." This is the result of what Christ has done. His righteous is credited to your account. You are justified, you are pronounced righteous before God, because of what Christ has done. No longer are you guilty. Now you are declared innocent. Now you are reconciled back to God. In his body on the cross, Christ established peace between heaven and earth, between God and man. "Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed."

We are healed!! Christ comes with healing in his wings. Christ brings wholeness, shalom, peace, to our souls. And to our bodies. Your soul is at peace with God because of what happened on this Good Friday. And because of what happened on this day, your body will be healed also. That will become clear on Sunday, the day when Jesus rises from the dead. And joined to Jesus, you will be raised also.

More of that on Sunday. But for now, know that you are saved, rescued and redeemed from all threatening peril. You are safe and secure in God's embrace, saved for eternal life.

"Behold, my servant," says the Lord. Yes, behold Jesus Christ. Behold him with the eyes of faith. Hold on to him as your Savior. In the darkness and the shadows, know that he is holding you close. Fear not. Let nothing terrify you. Your Savior is right at hand. Behold Jesus, the suffering, sacrificing, saving servant of the Lord.

*Please pray with me. Lord, our journey ends here, at the foot of the cross.*

*Darkness is falling. The crowd is restless. Our hearts break, as your cries pierce the night. Stay with us, Lord, for we need you close at hand. And when the night is over, and the journey continues, give us the courage to stay with you. Amen.*

