

Tuesday of Holy Week – Isaiah 50:4-9a

Pray this prayer. God answers prayer.

⁴The 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.

⁷But 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?

This reading from Isaiah, written many centuries before Jesus' birth, gives us a glimpse into the mind of Christ as he approaches his suffering and death. Do you remember the prayer we prayed yesterday, when we asked God for the same humility and patience that Christ evidenced? Today we get to see that humility and patience from the inside, as Jesus experienced them, and as we experience them in Him.

Isaiah sees first a listening obedience. Morning by morning God awakens my ear to hear. God's creative and redemptive Word speaks to us and calls forth the faithful trust which we need. This leads to the obedience. The prophet sees that Jesus will endure many hard things. His back was given to those who struck him, his beard pulled, he was mocked and humiliated. As we read the passion narrative this week, keep in mind that Jesus does this obediently. The Father has sent the Son to die for the sins of the world. The Son has obeyed the Father's request.

That ear, open to God's instruction, however, also has become a means for God to impart a faithful trust. Jesus sets his face like flint before the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and the soldiers because God has made a promise. He shall not be put to shame. He shall be vindicated. We come to the events of Holy Week with the end in sight. God has promised you and me the same resurrection. It is still terrifying to stand at the abyss of death. It looks so terrible, long, and dark. But Christ stood there too and stands there today with us. He holds our limp hands in his strong and perforated hands and asks this question, "Who is your adversary? Who contends with you?" He has the answer too, "Is it not the death that I have already conquered, the accuser whose charges I have already cleared? Let them come near, we have already defeated them."

Jesus knows what it is like to stand before the monster whom you fear. He prayed in the garden that this cup be taken from him. But he also trusted his Father's promise to him. He set his face like flint and endured the cross. Today he has risen from the dead so that he can stand with you before that which causes you to go pale in fear. The LORD God helps you. Trust him.

God be with you until we meet again. In Jesus' love and mercy, Pastor Wulf