**Isaiah 50:4-9**

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?

**“The Servant Set Upon The Cross”**

 Hosanna! Blessed is the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen. Today begins the start of Holy Week also known as The Passion. It is the center of the Church Year, which means this week holds out the heart of the Church. Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection is God’s salvation provided for us. Palm Sunday parallels the “saving” emphasis that was about to take place with Passover. The highest of feasts was an event that brought all to Jerusalem. People were coming from the farthest reaches of Israel. Believers even scattered among the nations. Holy Week now replaces Passover with Christ. He draws all to His sacrifice to celebrate Him in His Church.

 However just like the history of Israel, the visible church in our western world has felt exile and loss. A survey last month noted how about 1/10 of the US population located in the South and Midwest who stand at a distance. It states, “They still love Jesus, still believe in Scripture and most of the tenets of their Christian faith. But they have lost faith in the church.”[[1]](#footnote-1) If the church is simply an institution of man, then it has always been a failure. Holy Week reveals that faith alone is in Jesus Christ. Yet, from Christ there is the Church. One is greater than the other, but where this One is so is the other. To love Jesus is to love that He is the Servant set upon the cross for our salvation.

1. **The Servant speaks of His service through the prophet Isaiah.**
2. He would be obedient in every way.
* His mouth was to be in accord to what God says.
* His ears able to hear none other than God’s will.
* His perfect relationship to God was for the weary.
1. He describes how exposed He would be by His service.
* While other prophets turned aside from suffering like Jonah, Moses, and even Abraham.
* This Servant was not going to rebel or turn back regardless where the Lord would take Him.
* 700 years prior to the cross we hear, “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.”
1. He explains that His stubbornness would have a sure foundation.
* God helps Him so the disgrace of it all and even death had an answer.
* His face was “like a flint” refusing that guilt and the adversaries had the last say.
* God would vindicate or justify His suffering, so He does not waver.
1. **On Palm Sunday the Servant is Christ who comes wholeheartedly.**
2. His obedience bore benefits for Israel and all people.
* Jesus preached the Word of repentance and faith in God’s promise of the Savior for sinners.
* The will of God He shared, “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:40).
* By His perfect relationship as the Son, Jesus reached out with to restore weary sinners with forgiveness, healing weary bodies with life, and delivering weary souls from darkness.
1. Obedience led Christ to expose His greatest service to give.
* While the crowd shouted, “Hosanna, to the Son of David” a lowly donkey bore this king into Jerusalem to be the sacrifice.
* As hard as His disciples tried to glorify Him, He would not change His course saying, “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).
* Jesus marked Palm Sunday by His willingness to suffer, “for he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
1. Exposer to the cross only made Christ more stubborn to be Savior.
* No crowds present in the Garden only His coming disgrace and death, but He still prayed to the Father, “Not my will, but Yours be done.”
* His face saw that ride into Jerusalem as a one-way street handing Him over to His enemy and judgment of sinners to become the chief cornerstone.
* Jesus does not waver for His suffering and death is justified proof that God has gone out of His way to love a sinful world.
1. **Now the Servant set upon the cross is the Savior and Lord we trust in His Church.**
2. If our obedience made the difference, we would no longer need to believe in Jesus.
* Yet, He saves fearful disciples who run away, prideful disciples that argue about greatness, and even loveless disciples who lash out.
* Baptism holds out the mocked, beaten, whipped, and crucified Jesus is the king of glory who now has claimed you warts and all.
* Joined to God’s Suffering Servant means His Word is truth, His Will is good for our life, and we have a perfect relationship with the Father by His Son.
1. Exposer to the Law is healthy, so all we have is faith alone resting on Jesus.
* None gets through holy week without suffering that turns us to the Gospel for there is no other light in the darkness.
* The Servant cries out, “Father, forgive them” for schisms, false doctrines, and loveless ways in the Church deny Christ and His cross.
* Receiving Forgiveness is the heartbeat of Christ in His Church, “By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls”(1 Peter 2:24-25).
1. The stubbornness of Christ, invites us to trust in Him who alone saves sinners.
* There is no greater love than God’s Passover Lamb who lays down His life for the sins of the people, especially His Church.
* Christ puts His face to us in the sacrament to have the last say, “Given and shed for you” promising His love is in Your life.
* Justification for you or that of the Church comes only by Christ’s Word and Sacrament who unwavering proclaims Himself Savior and Lord.

 Palm Sunday puts us in the right position to see Christ as

the Suffering Servant. This is the heart and center of the Church for God only saves sinners. No other righteousness lasts and none other directs faith in the Church to faith in Christ who suffered all things for us. To love Jesus is to love that He is the Servant set upon the cross for our salvation. Amen. Now the peace of Christ be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. https://www.barna.com/research/meet-love-jesus-not-church/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)