

23 February 2005
Lent 2 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

“By His Wounds We Are Healed”

Text: Isaiah 53:4-5 (Luke 5:17-26; 1 Peter 2:24-25)

I remember when I was a kid, my brother and I shaved all the hair off one of my sister’s dolls. What had once been a beautiful doll was now pretty ugly. And my sister was mad – and rightfully so! . . . A couple of months after I got my first new car, somebody “keyed” it. They took a key and put a deep scratch in the paint the entire length of one side of the car! And I was mad, and sad – and rightfully so. . . . And I remember when I was in New York, we always had a garden in the backyard, with tomatoes, among other things. Until one year the neighborhood kids stomped through our garden going after a ball, and broke them. And I was mad, and disappointed – and rightfully so.

I’m sure you’ve had all those kinds of things happen to you as well. Something new, something beautiful, something you worked so hard at – *ruined* – by the careless, or deliberate, or malicious acts of someone else. And when it happens, you’re mad, and sad, and disappointed. . . . And so it was with God and His creation, and *we did it*. For in the beginning, His creation was perfect, unspoiled, and beautiful in every way – until we made it ugly. Ugly with sin, as we consider last week. And for that, for that sin, a righteous God, rightfully angry, that His creation had been so disfigured and broken by His disobedient children . . . well, there would be “hell to pay,” so to speak.

That is the punishment that Isaiah speaks of tonight. Of Jesus, the suffering servant. That ***“He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed.”*** Or in other words, we ruined, Jesus paid. He had no sin for which to pay. He was the perfectly obedient child we could not be. The debt He paid and the punishment He took on the cross was ours. He is our substitute. With the result that our guilt and fear has been replaced with peace and healing.

But at first many did not see it that way, even as many do not see it that way today. Many thought Jesus was ***“stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted”*** because He *deserved* it! Because of what He did. Because of His blasphemy in calling Himself the chosen Messiah, God’s Son; because of His prophecy to destroy the Temple; because He claimed to be the Saviour. False prophets and false christs have to be dealt with, and in the most severe way! For they are dangerous, and mislead the people, and give God a bad name.

And so the Jewish leaders – the Pharisees and Sadducees and Scribes and Lawyers – worked to this end. To get rid of Jesus, and by getting rid of Jesus, to *save the people from Him!*

Some churches are doing that today too. Trying to save people by getting rid of Jesus. There are churches removing crosses from their sanctuaries, not speaking against and condemning sin, and not preaching Christ crucified – for this offends people. It turns them off, and if we want them to come into our churches, we have to make the message more positive, more upbeat, more attractive! We have to do away with the ugliness and the condemnation talk. And the result is that success has replaced our substitute, culture has replaced the cross, and relevance has replaced our Redeemer – and just as with the Jews, getting rid of Jesus, all in the name of saving people!

But what do we need saving from? If it is from poverty, or stress, or low self-esteem, or troubles, or family problems, or procrastination, or forgetfulness, or any of a hundred other things we'd like to change in our lives, then the fact is we don't need Jesus. There are plenty of other people and books and seminars to “save” you from those things, and besides, when you die, you'll leave it all behind anyway. . . . But your sin, that's something else. No amount of effort, no volume of advice, no change in thinking can get you out from under the fact that you owe a debt, a *big* debt, a debt you cannot pay or pass on to your heirs. A debt to God for what you have done. For the debt of sin that has *caused* all these other problems. And Jesus is the only one who can pay that debt. The only one who can save us from our sin.

And so we heard from St. Mark that this is what Jesus has come to do. We heard there of a paralyzed man let down through the roof of a house, that he might be saved. *But saved from what?* His paralysis? Jesus says to him, **“your sins are forgiven you.”** For this is what Jesus has come to do – set us free from our sins; from our condemnation; from the power of the devil. And when we have that – the forgiveness of our sins – we have everything. Jesus shows this by healing the man, but not just so that he would be healed! His healing is only to testify to the greater gift, *the forgiveness of sins*: **“that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”** For this is the gift that we do not leave behind. This is the gift that sees us through this life and into the next. This is the gift that destroys death and the grave, and gives us hope, and peace, and true healing. Eternal healing. Healing to a life that will never end. For **“by His wounds you have been healed.”**

And the resurrection is the proof of that. The resurrection that we will celebrate at the end of this Lenten season shows us that our debt has been paid, the grave has been conquered, and death can no longer hold our Saviour, or those who belong to Him, in its

grip. ***“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.”*** And because He has, they are not on us. Because He has, we are set free. Because He has, no matter what problems or troubles or infirmities or sadness effect us in this life, they cannot conquer us. For we have a Saviour. One who has taken our place. Who for us and for our salvation was ***“stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted,”*** so that His life and kingdom could be ours. *And they are.* They are, for in the midst of our sickness and troubles, the words spoken to the paralytic are also spoken to us: ***“your sins are forgiven you.”*** And when we have the forgiveness of sins, we have everything. Both for this life, and the next! By His wounds, we are healed.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.