

27 February 2013
Lent 2 Midweek

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“The Patient Lamb of God”

Text: 1 Peter 2:21-24 (Isaiah 53:5-7, 10-11)

The season of Lent always directs our attention to the sufferings of Christ, and that is what the next line in our hymn for this season would have us consider as well. For tonight we consider the line “ever patient and lowly.” The *lowly* part we’ll do next week; the *patient* part is for our meditation tonight.

Now, usually we use the word patient these days to mean tolerant and enduring. But that is not what it means here. People would *like* God to be tolerant in our day and age, especially that He be tolerant of whatever behaviour we want to indulge in and whatever beliefs we want to be true. But God is not tolerant of sin, though He is long-suffering with sinners, not wanting any to perish but all to come to a knowledge of the truth and turn to Him. But no, God is not tolerant of sin. He cannot endure it, ignore it, or overlook it; it must be dealt with.

And so the Son of God came to suffer for our sins. Which is what the word patient here means - it is from the the Latin for suffering. The patient Lamb of God is the suffering Lamb of God.

And so we heard those haunting words from Isaiah again tonight about Jesus and His suffering: ***He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*** Yet not only that; not only did Jesus suffer for our sins, He died for them. Yes, as Isaiah continues, ***it was the will of the Lord to crush him.*** If you ever think your sins don’t matter, that your rebellion doesn’t matter, that its just a little thing, that it’s okay because you’re not hurting anyone . . . think again. Every sin did hurt someone: the Son of God Himself.

Now usually, when someone suffers, we have pity on them, our hearts go out to them in their pain. But not so here. Jesus does not want you to feel sorry for Him. Rather, in His suffering, Jesus is the one who has pity on you, and whose heart is going out to you. This is why He is suffering. It’s about His love for you. His love that was *willing* to do this, that *wanted* to do this, for you and your good. And so we see what true love is. True love never seeks its own good or its own way, but pours itself out for its beloved. And that’s what the *patient* Lamb of God has done for you, His beloved. He poured out His blood, He poured out His life, for you. The Son for the slave, the perfect for the sinful, the righteous for the unrighteous.

And now to this you too have been called. That's what we heard from Peter. Listen again to those words:

For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

An example . . . to follow in His steps. That's heavy stuff, but that's the Christian life: the life of Christ with the love of Christ.

But its important to think of this suffering rightly. You do not suffer for your own sins, to save yourself - Christ did that. He suffered for your sins and He died and rose to save you. You're forgiven. That's done. Once and for all. Period. End of story.

So then, like Christ, this suffering is not for your own sins, *but because of the sins of others*. As Christ was the patient Lamb of God, the suffering Lamb of God **for us**, so are we to be patient and suffering **for others**. Because no longer held hostage and enslaved by sinful thoughts or emotions but set free in Christ, we now love as Christ has loved us. Spouses, parents, children, friends, neighbors, co-workers, even our persecutors and enemies - we do not revile, threaten, lash out, or strike back, but love and forgive and **entrust ourselves to Him who judged justly**. To Him who bore our sins.

Now that sounds nearly impossible! And it would be if "example" here meant that we have to somehow whip up and generate this love and desire and ability within ourselves. Because we can't. But Christ has given us this love, His love. For through His suffering, through His death and resurrection, Christ has not only had pity on us and shown us a new way of life, He has given us *a whole new life*. A new life not like our old life. A new life as Christ lives in us with His love and forgiveness. And so "example" here really means pattern or paradigm. We live like Him for He lives in us.

Which still isn't easy. Our old sinful nature doesn't like suffering and doesn't like to be hurt and doesn't like to be told what to do and so fights against this like its a life and death struggle! *Which, actually, it is*. For Christ has come to kill that old, vindictive, sinful man in us, and raise a new and holy man to live a new life. That new man doesn't like suffering either, and we certainly don't go looking for it. But we don't have to. Sin will find you. Suffering will find you. Count on it. The devil will see to that. And as evidence, there are a lot of Christians who are walking

around wounded; wounded by the sins and actions of others.

But what you do next is not up to the devil. No, for you have been baptized. You have been set free from the grip of sin, death, and the devil. You are a child of God. Jesus bore not only your sins, but also your hurts, your pains, your sorrows and griefs - He took them all to His cross, and as Isaiah said: **by His wounds you have been healed**. And so now instead of these things controlling us and how we act and how we live, the love of Christ controls us. The patient love of Christ, the suffering love of Christ. And so the gift we have received is the gift we now give. That others, too, may know this love of Christ.

To this you were called, Peter says. Or in other words, it is part and parcel of the Christian life. Of course, it is the Christian life *imperfectly lived* - how often are we motivated and spurred on by things *other* than the love of Christ for us! Which is why we keep returning to our Saviour, to repent and receive the forgiveness of the one who suffered for us, and why we need to keep repenting to one another - to receive the forgiveness of the one who is suffering because of us. To give and receive forgiveness - to this you have been called. That's what the patient Lamb of God is all about. And there is nothing more loving that you can do than that.

So it is no longer **an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth**. There is a new paradigm in town, the cross, where Jesus gave His eyes for our eyes, His teeth for our teeth, his life for our life; where Jesus turned the other cheek, gave His back to the whip, and gave his cloak and tunic; where Jesus didn't just go the extra mile, but gave everything and refused us nothing; and where in the midst of His suffering and pain said: *Father, forgive them*. No sweeter words could we hear; no sweeter words could we speak. Yes, **by His wounds we have been healed**.

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