

Jesu Juva
Text: Isaiah 50:5-10

These words from the prophet Isaiah contain one of his many prophecies about what would happen to the promised Messiah. It is not what one would expect. A Messiah, a Saviour, is one who rises up and leads men. A larger-than-life figure who triumphs over all odds and all foes. A valiant warrior.

So these are very strange words indeed. ***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.*** Those are words that describe the vanquished, not the victor.

But there is something else strange about those words, something different and not quite right according to this way of thinking. These words are not just describing what was done to the Messiah, but what He does. He *gives* His back to those who would strike it. He *gives* His cheek to those who would pull out the beard. He *offers* and does not hide His face from the mocking, the taunts, and the spitting. This is His doing, not what is done to Him unwillingly. This is what this Messiah will do and how He will conquer. This is clearly a Messiah unlike any other.

And in all this, He says, ***the Lord God helps me***, though it looks like the Lord God has either left Him or is punishing Him. That is not the case.

Therefore, He says, ***I have not been disgraced . . . I shall not be put to shame.*** Though that was exactly the aim of those who did this - to shame and disgrace - and they thought they had done so and were quite satisfied with their work, no. This is the Messiah's glory. For He is doing this for you. He will be ***vindicated***. It will be shown that those who looked like they vanquished Him were vanquished themselves, and that He who looked defeated is actually victorious.

And then some questions from the mouth of the Messiah: ***Who will contend with me? Who is my adversary? Who will declare me guilty?*** It is not only those who did those things, is it? It is you and me, as I pit my will against His will, as I sin against Him, as I think Him guilty of failing to keep His promises to me and so take matters into my own hands. Repent. We gain nothing with all that. We still, as Isaiah so descriptively put it, ***wear out like a garment and the moth still eat us up.*** That's the real defeat. Death.

But not so for the Messiah. Though He dies, yet shall He live. He is the way to life.

So the Lord opened *your* ear to hear this word. To repent and not rebel, to trust and not turn back. For the Lord is faithful, your Messiah is faithful. What looks like shame and defeat in this world and life may not be as it seems. The path we fear may just be the way to life.

*Who among you fears the Lord
and obeys the voice of his servant?
Let him who walks in darkness
and has no light
trust in the name of the Lord
and rely on his God.*

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