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Text: Isaiah 49:1-7

God ways are not our ways. The mind of God cannot be fathomed by human reason. That is no where as evident as in this prophecy of Isaiah about the Messiah today. For the *less* successful the Messiah *seems*, the *more* successful He really is.

Isaiah starts out with a call to all people near and far to listen, and He says some impressive things of the Messiah. He was specifically born for this, from His mother's womb, and named by the Lord Himself. His Word is His weapon, His sharp sword and polished arrow, and the hand of the Lord protects Him. For He is the chosen servant of the Lord and in whom God will be glorified. He is named Israel because He comes to be one with her, with us. He is Israel's king, Israel's Lord, and takes all Israel into Himself to save her.

All of which makes the next line from Isaiah that much more unexpected. Instead of hearing of the Messiah's success he says: ***I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity.*** And this week we see just that. The Messiah is rejected by His own people. The leaders line up against Him, the crowds yell crucify and trade Him for a criminal. His disciples run away in fear after one betrays Him and another denies even knowing Him. He is strung up on a cross as a common criminal. By all appearance it seems that all is lost. All is defeat. All has been for naught.

But words of faith we hear as well. ***Yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God.*** The future, the work, the outcome is the Lord's. It is a good lesson for us to learn. How often we rely on our own strength. How often we judge by what we see and feel. How often we despair when things seem not to be going so well. Stop. Repent. The Lord does much with little. The Lord who created all that is from nothing, is able to do great things for us, even when all seems lost. All the Scriptures bear witness to this: He is the strength of the weak, the hope of the hopeless, and the life of the dead. And so faith clings to the Lord who is able.

And then we hear not only that the Lord is able, but the greater the failure, the greater His work and victory! And so through a Messiah rejected and crucified, the Lord says: it's not enough to just save Israel! This crucified Messiah will save the world. ***It is too light [too little] a thing that you should be my servant [just] to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*** And this too: Kings and princes will prostrate themselves before Him.

Because, Isaiah says, ***the Lord is faithful.*** What He says, He does. What He promises, He fulfills. Always. And what good news that is for us! Our Saviour is not limited by our weaknesses and failures, our doubts and despair. He is able to work great and amazing

things even when everything seems worse than lost. Can you imagine the disciples slapping each other on the back when Jesus was hanging on the cross and saying: *This is great! We won!* That's preposterous, isn't it? Yet that's exactly what happened. The suffering and death of Jesus is our life, our light, our salvation and forgiveness. What seems to be is not all there is.

So at all times of life, no matter how things are going, faith has a firm and sure confidence and foundation. Your Lord is at work - for you, in you, and through you. And is working great things that are beyond our wildest dreams and imaginings.

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