

15 April 2019
Holy Monday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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Holy Monday Meditation
Text: Isaiah 50:5-10

Isaiah here is speaking of Jesus. God's Suffering Servant. The Servant, the Son, God would send to suffer. ***The Lord God has opened His ear.*** He has heard the Word of the Lord. And we remember the time He was in the Temple as a twelve year old boy, questioning the teachers and learning the Word of God, including all the prophecies that He Himself had come to fulfill. And He did. Every one of them. The easy ones, the hard ones, every one. *He would not be rebellious*, like Israel was in the wilderness. *He would not turn back*, again as Israel was tempted to do, time and time again. For Jesus, it was only forward. Forward, to the cross.

And so He ***gave His back to those who strike***, and His ***cheeks to those who pull out the beard***, and He ***did not hide His face from disgrace and spitting***. Notice that Isaiah does not say here that these things just happened to Him, but they *He gave* His back and face to those who did this. He is purposeful. He does this for a reason. To fulfill the Word of the Lord. To offer Himself for the life of the world. For His life was not taken from Him - He laid it down for you.

This is meekness without weakness. We usually equate the two, but not so with Jesus. He is not beaten because He cannot defend Himself. He is not disgraced because He is timid and under the power of another. He is the strong one here, and those afflicting Him the weak ones. He is the strong one here, as He bears the sin of the world being inflicted upon Him. And He wants no revenge - not then, not now, not ever. He wants only to take all this for you and me, in our place.

And He is able, for He is not alone. ***The Lord God helps me***, He says. He is not forgotten. He is not dis-graced, put out of grace. Men may have done that to Him, but not his Father. He will ***not be put to shame***. Shame here meaning to show that His faith, His trust, had been foolish, in a God that cannot save. It looked that way as He was manhandled, beaten, and crucified. But that's not what's going on. He was vindicated, shown that He was true and right all along, in His resurrection. For He who puts His trust in God's Word and promises will never be put to shame. And, He says, the one ***who vindicates Him is near*** - even in His suffering and pain.

Three questions come next: ***Who will contend with me? Who is my adversary? Who will declare me guilty?*** Many did, we know. And still do. Then it was false witness, but their testimony did not agree. Charges brought by the chief priests that weren't really charges

at all. Pontius Pilate wouldn't even declare Him guilty - even three times saying that He wasn't; that there was no guilt in this man.

But this does not stop a world hell bent on sin and death. When controlled by sin and selfish desires, and our own definition of right and wrong, and when happiness is attained only in getting our own way, satisfying your lust is the only thing that matters. And this is what they do to God's servant. They lusted for His death, and they got it.

Or so they thought. But God has a funny way of making His will be done in the end. And it was. When those who lusted for his death were shocked just a few short days later . . . when their victory was short-lived, and shown to actually be no victory at all. God's Servant is right: the Lord God helps me.

Isaiah then turns to us, to you. To us listening to Him tonight. ***Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant?*** he asks. For He has opened your ear to hear, and you have heard the Word of the Lord. Have you been rebellious? Have you turned the cheek to those who strike? Have you been meek, or just weak in faith by defending yourself and striking out against others?

Repent, for ***the Lord God helps*** you, too. In His Servant who suffered and died for you, to atone for your sins past, present, and future. Every one of them on Him and not you. And so while the godless will ***wear out like a moth-eaten garment***, you who ***trust in the name of the Lord*** and ***rely on God*** your Saviour will rise and stand with your Vindicator on the Last Day. Because of Him, you will not be put to shame.

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