



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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October 1, 2006

17th Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 50:4-10

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Isaiah 50:4-10

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 116

Second Lesson: 2:1-5, 8-10, 14-18

Gospel: 27-35

Know the Word that Sustains the Weary

642...and then the little voice would repeat, 642...57...57...33...33—okay, now put it all together—I vaguely as a child remember doing that with my mother. She drilled into me over and over my phone number. It is something that you need to know, right? You need to know your phone number. You need to teach your child the phone number so they can call home. I remember also being taught that I needed to know my address. The other third grade truth that my mother taught me that I needed to know every day of my life was to wear clean underwear because I might end up in the hospital and embarrass her if I didn't.

I don't ever remember mom sitting me down and saying, "Okay, here is how you fight with your little sister." I don't ever remember being taught that lesson. When I got older, I don't remember any class or anyone's parents or friend or anyone saying, "Here is how you worry. When something is bothering you, here is how you just sit down and worry about it." I am betting that no one ever taught you how to worry and no one ever taught you how to fight with a sibling. No one ever taught you how to get angry at the person that cuts you off in traffic. No one ever taught you how to get upset about various things in life, right? There are some things we just know and some things we need to be taught to know. It is interesting that the things we just know by nature are so often things that God calls sin. It shows us how we are born corrupted by sin and how desperately we need a Savior.

The Words that we just read from the prophet Isaiah in Chapter 50 told us something that we need to know. It is not something that we know by nature. It is something that we need to be taught, but when we know this, it is going to be even more comforting and even more lifesaving than knowing your address and your phone number. We need to know the Word that sustains the weary. What makes it even more fascinating when you read Chapter 50 of Isaiah and you hear *The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary* (Isaiah 50:4), it is not just the prophet Isaiah that is saying that. It is the Servant, the One who would be the Messiah—Jesus, who would be born some 700 years later, speaking through the pen of the prophet Isaiah.

So what we learn this morning is that the Word that sustains the weary sustained the Servant who suffered and died in our place. That ought to tell us that it is fairly important. That ought to tell us that the Word that sustains the weary will sustain you and me when we face the things in this world that make us weary and worried and burdened. Go to the Word that sustains the weary.

Last week we looked at Isaiah in Chapter 35 and we talked about how Isaiah is divided basically into two sections. Chapters 1-39 are where Isaiah wrote urging the children of Israel to turn back to God and repent so they wouldn't go off into exile. It is a lot of judgment, glimpses and flashes of the Gospel and the promise of the Messiah, but overall in general a lot more judgment. Then Chapters 40-66 are almost like a completely different emphasis where it is talking to the children of Israel as though they are already in exile even though it hadn't happened yet, and telling them "when you are in exile, don't worry. God won't forget you. He will come to save you. He will come to deliver you." God will not only deliver you from exile, but in the second part of the Book of Isaiah, right around Chapter 50, the Suffering Servant is depicted as the One who would take the punishment that brings us peace. Do you remember that familiar phrase from Isaiah? It is just a couple of chapters down the road from where we are (see Isaiah 53:5-7). The Servant would take our iniquities and our sins and carry them on him and like a sheep before the slaughter is silent, so he would not say a thing—all these various things about the Suffering Servant and what he would do to pay for our sins. And in this section that we just read, it is the Suffering Servant that is speaking.

He is talking about his work 700 years before it happened and saying in essence, "I suffered a lot. People mocked me. People spit at me. People pulled my beard. People beat my back. People continually attacked the Suffering Servant and I didn't withdraw from that because I knew the Word that sustains the weary." That Word that sustains the weary for Jesus was the mission his Father had given him—to come to this world, to live in our place, to die in our place, to take all of our sins on him and in the most unjust act of all time, the most unfair thing of all time, to carry them to the cross where all of our sins would be paid for.

Jesus, as true man, was tempted by the devil over and over and over. It wasn't just the three times that we read about—the three temptations of Jesus. We are told he was tempted in every way that we are. Everything that gets us down, everything that gets us upset, everything that we might face or have faced or will face, he was tempted in every way that we are, yet he was without sin. But it wasn't necessarily easy for him to be without sin. Think of how often you read about how Jesus went off by himself to meditate and to pray—to know the Word that would sustain the weary, to be with his heavenly Father and to be strengthened by his Father. Think of how often you read in the Gospels about God sending angels to strengthen Jesus. The stain glass window in our church above the statue of Christ—Jesus praying in the Garden—didn't God strengthen him then with angels so that he could go and face that crowd? And just like he says here in Isaiah, "*I have offered my back to those...I have not drawn back*" (Isaiah 50:5-6), do you remember what he did then? When the crowd came with their torches and their clubs and their swords, he asked them, "Who are you looking for?" They said, "Jesus of Nazareth." He said, "I am he." Do you remember what happened when he said, "I am he"? Just like you used to do with dominoes—set them up and knock them all over—they all went down—all the people, all the clubs, all the swords. The second time they got up and asked, "Who are you looking for?" "Jesus of Nazareth." "I am he." BOOM—they all fall down again. They didn't take him by force. They didn't surprise him. *I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. ...I did not hide my face* (Isaiah

50:5-6)—why? Because I know that *I will not be disgraced* (Isaiah 50:7) the Savior said. I know that the one who vindicates me is near. He will sustain me. Before time began, the Father, the Son and the Spirit as our Triune God knew that we would fall into sin and that we would need a Savior and Jesus would be our Savior.

The Word that sustains the weary is the Gospel promise of how sins are taken away, not by our efforts, not by us pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps, not by us just keeping a stiff upper lip, but because Jesus did it all perfectly in our place. He needed the Word that sustained the weary. He needed the strength that came from the Father. And as we sit here this morning, we ought to realize that you and I need that strength too.

We don't have the strength Jesus had. We have a sinful nature that at times is going to become very weary and become very worried and it is going to focus on outward appearances just like Peter did in our Gospel lesson today. Peter saying, "Suffering? No! We don't want any of that! Jesus suffering? That is not for you! We won't let it happen to you!" Do you remember that this is the guy that pulled out the sword and botched his first ear piercing attempt and cut off Malchus' ear? He didn't want to see Jesus suffer because it wasn't his picture of the Messiah.

Sometimes you and I have the picture that being a Christian means that we will never face difficulty or never face worry—at least that is maybe what we hope. But God says that it is going to be difficult. *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24). That is what Jesus said in our Gospel. Picking up our cross (picking up those difficulties) and following him can make us weary. Losing a loved one, facing sickness, facing difficulties, facing problems, facing challenges, facing people that we just don't like can make us weary, but in Christ we want to love people. In Christ we want to face those difficulties with a confidence that comes not from ourselves, but from our God. In order to do that, we need to, as Jesus urges us to do, *trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God* (Isaiah 50:10). Know the Word that sustains the weary.

That Word is the promise that God loves us no matter what our eyes might tell us. Our eyes see difficulties and pain and suffering and we say, "I don't know if God loves me anymore." God says, "Look at the cross! There I stretched out my arms and died for you and took away your sins. If I loved you enough to do that, I love you enough to be with you always to the very ends of the age. If I loved you enough to take away your greatest problem, your sin, I will be with you through the lesser problems that come from living in a world infested by sin." That is God's promise to us.

Know the Word that sustains the weary. As a pastor, I get the privilege of seeing how that Word sustains the weary. I can go and visit people in the hospital or the nursing home and I see people at various stages of weariness and it amazes me—some of the people who have spent so much time in God's Word and how they face this difficulty with a confidence that at times I wonder, can I have that same confidence? Would I face some of these same difficulties with this absolute trust that no matter what happens, God is doing all things well and God will take me to be with him? I am

amazed when I see Christians live with the Word that sustains the weary. It brings joy to my heart when I walk out of those rooms and see how God has strengthened these people.

One of the common factors is that these people are the people that are in the Word of God. They are making faithful use of the Sacraments, and they are in the Word. They are in the Meditations Booklet. They are in their own Bible. And the Lord has strengthened them in ways that amazes me.

The Word that sustains the weary is there. It is waiting for you. God wants to lift you up and hold you up and walk along with you and strengthen you so that you can face things that you think you can't face. That is something worth knowing. That is something that is, as we are told today in James, worth living—living in response to God day after day to thank him for this incredible gift.