

**Good Friday • April 10, 2009**  
*St. John's Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA*  
*Rev. Braun Campbell*  
Isaiah 53:1-6

"Wounds that Heal"

"O sacred Head now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down; now scornfully surrounded, with thorns Thine only crown. O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss, till now was Thine! Yet though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine."

For the past six weeks or so, this time of year that we know as Lent, we have sung those words in our midweek worship services. We sang them again today. These words, even stripped of musical accompaniment, are still powerful: though only a few lines' worth of text, they do well to summarize what Good Friday is all about. The words aren't everyday words – "weighed down," "scornfully," "despised" – each is rich with meaning. These are weighty words, so let's speak plainly in the short time that we have together today.

Lent is about God's love. That might seem like an odd thing to say, considering how depressing the themes of the season seem to be. Yes, we do think about how we have fallen short of God's will. Yes, we do often give up things that we enjoy as a reminder of what Jesus sacrificed. Yes, we spend these forty days in many ways thinking about today, reflecting on Jesus' death on the cross of Calvary. Indeed, there are people in the world who think that Christians – and maybe especially Lutherans – spend too much time talking about Jesus being crucified. They think it's depressing and morbid. Even some Christians think that a crucifix, a cross that bears a depiction of Christ's body on it, is offensive. Where's the love in this?

Hear Isaiah's words. The prophet paints a picture of God's servant, one who "had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But Isaiah goes on to say that "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." The servant, Jesus, is the scapegoat. He takes the fall for us, setting us free. There's the love in Lent. That is why we are here today.

Someone recently asked me why we call Good Friday "good," and you've just heard the answer. But though "good," Good Friday wasn't pretty. God's love for you and me wasn't the convenient kind where He could just write a check or sign a pardon and make everything all better. His love compelled Him to step in, refusing to leave us lost to our sin. His love took him to the cross where nails and spear pierced him through, where "he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities." His blood paid the price for our freedom. Good Friday is God getting His hands dirty, for us.

The wounds that Jesus suffered are the wounds that heal. He was broken to make us whole. The words of Isaiah also tell us, "upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed." The suffering and death of God's servant, His own Son, on the cross, offers healing to us hurting and dying people. Every Lenten season gives us the opportunity to remember that God is with us, even when we feel the pains and consequences of living in a fallen and falling-apart world. Where is God when we need healing? Hear Isaiah's message this Good Friday and know that you can find the answer to that question here, looking to God's dirtied, bloodstained hands, extended on the cross for you.

Lent is a somber season of reflection, but it must never a depressing or self-pitying time, because Lent is about God's love. And though Lent may be drawing to a close, God's love does not. He stays with us and calls us to look ahead. We know the rest of the story, because we know that God is a God of reversals. He made everything from nothing. He brings healing out of wounds. And He gives life from death.

Amen.