

Good Friday • April 3, 2015  
St. John's Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA  
Rev. Braun Campbell  
Isaiah 52:13–53:12

“Singing with the Exiles: All”

This song is our song.

It's Good Friday, and you and I have heard the fourth and final Servant Song from the prophet Isaiah's message to the Hebrew people living in exile in Babylon. The New Testament frequently quotes this text from Isaiah 52-53, a section of the Scriptures which describes this Messiah through whom God would deliver His people. Take a look at it. Parts of this passage are spoken by God. Parts are spoken by the people of Israel. But the whole thing points to Jesus. This song is what it's all about – and it's about all.

“All” covers a lot of ground. It's pretty vast, as vast as anything can get. It goes from the highest to the lowest, the closest to the farthest, the most miniscule to the most massive: the entire complete totality. All is greater than some. All is greater than many. All is greater than most. It's the greatest possible degree of anything.

In the opening line of the fourth Servant Song, we learn that **the Servant had it all**: “*Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.*” (Isaiah 52:13) The words used there to describe his position are only used in Isaiah about one other: Yahweh, God of heaven and earth (6:5). The Servant is the King of Kings Himself – he definitely had it all! – but still he stepped down into His creation to serve.

**The Servant gave it all.** With 53:1, the song shifts to the voice of the peoples who rejected the Servant, looking back at how he appeared among them. He wasn't attractive or majestic or even significant in their eyes. He wasn't someone they'd look to follow or praise. And that was before they took him and beat him and punished him, so much so that “his appearance was disfigured beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of ordinary men” (52:14). The Servant would be stricken, smitten by God, afflicted, led like a lamb to the slaughter, cut off from the land of the living, and assigned a grave with the wicked. The Servant gave it all – to the last drop of his blood – so that he could take it all on.

On this Good Friday, we recognize that Jesus is the suffering Servant. God's Word through the prophet points perfectly to him, the Son of God who came to save the world that would reject him. Jesus did that by taking it all on, as the people of Israel confess in Isaiah 53. They acknowledge the Servant as their Savior: he bore our grief and sickness and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities. He took on the chastisement that brought us peace and by his wound we are healed. **The Servant took it all onto himself**, they sing, all of their guilt and sin. More than some, more than many, more than most: all.

This song is our song. We can sing the final Servant Song because we're part of the people who confess the Servant as our Savior. We acknowledge that Jesus went to suffer and to die in our place. Jesus took all of your guilt, all of your sin, all of your brokenness to the cross with him. He took mine, too. He carried it all for all of us, and there's nothing left for us to do about it. Look at the cross, and see that the Servant took it all on in your place and my place, for your good and my good. That's what Good Friday is all about.

**The Servant delivers it all**, too. Through the Righteous One (53:11), you and I are made righteous and brought into a restored relationship with God. Jesus, the faithful Servant, paid for the entire complete totality of our sin – all of it. Because of Jesus' faithfulness, we have God's unlimited forgiveness. You and I, who have been exiles because of our sin, have been given release and freedom.

Good Friday doesn't really seem like a day for songs. Joy seems out of place as we remember the Servant's suffering on our behalf. But we journey through the valley of the shadow of death looking ahead to the joy and victory of Easter, because the Servant Song does, too. The close of this song looks ahead to the resurrection, with the Lord speaking blessing. God will give His Servant the joy of life with his descendants, the many upon many who would be saved through his faithfulness. The Lord promises them a share of the Servant's all-encompassing victory over the enemy: the entire complete total victory of life over death, of faithfulness and forgiveness over sin.

With the exiles on this Good Friday, we sing of Jesus, the faithful Servant, the Messiah who stepped down into his creation to serve and was lifted up on the cross. He had it all. He gave it all. He took it all on. And he delivered it all, for us all. This song is our song.

Amen.