

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost – September 23, 2012
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

(Isaiah 50:4-10)

The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. 5) The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. 6) I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. 7) Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. 8) He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! 9) It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up. 10) Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

Dear fellow servants of the Lord:

“Who am I?” – We played that little game with our children earlier in our service. Now I’d like to play a version of this game with the whole congregation. Reflect on the words of our OT lesson and tell me, “Who is speaking these words?”

There are numerous texts similar to this in the OT – texts which at first hearing would appear to the words of an individual like the prophet or the psalmist. However with closer examination – it is discovered that the words have to be Jesus’ words. As a clear example of this let’s consider Psalm 16. In verses 7-11 we hear the writer say: **I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. 8) I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9) Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, 10) because you will not abandon me to the grave, (up to this point these could be the words of any God-fearing individual but now listen carefully to the next phrase!) nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 11) You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.** (Psalm 16:7-11 NIV84)

With the exception of the Lord Jesus Christ every other human body is subject to decay and so we have to conclude that these are the words of Jesus himself. Indeed Peter stressed that very point in his sermon on Pentecost when he spoke of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and pointed to him as the Lord of life.

When we consider the words of our text for today carefully – we realize that these words also find perfect fulfillment in Jesus alone. In this text Jesus speaks of his sufferings and death, his willingness to do his Father’s will and the benefit of this for those who need of his saving strength.

May the Holy Spirit strengthen our faith in Jesus as we are encouraged by this text to:

TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

1. Who suffered willingly for us
2. Who offered himself on purpose for us
3. Who won the victory completely for us

The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught. 5) The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. 6) I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

Let's consider these words from a NT perspective. God the Father had given his Son the authority to preach Good News to the poor. In preparation for that ministry Jesus sat at the feet of the teachers in the temple at Jerusalem when he was 12 years old asking them questions and learning from the Word which they taught him.

Jesus' aim and goal was to do the will of him who sent him. It was the Father's will for all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. (cf. 1 Timothy 2:3-4) The salvation of all would come through the sacrifice of his Son.

Jesus willingly suffered death and hell for us. With a full understanding of what awaited him in Jerusalem, Jesus headed there to do his Father's will. (Luke 18:31-33) tells us: **Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. 32) He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. 33) On the third day he will rise again."** (NIV 84)

The Savior's willingness to do his Father's will is also evident in his prayer in Gethsemane on the night before his death – not my will but yours be done. And the words describing his suffering also found fulfillment as we recall how he was treated before the Jewish Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate. He was beaten, tortured, mocked spit upon and he allowed it to happen as a part of the humiliation which the Lord of all endured so you and I would not have to suffer the punishment from God which our sins deserve.

Our text describes Jesus in his role as the perfect prophet and priest. Through his instructed tongue he offers comfort to the weary and promises them rest. **Come unto me all you who are burdened and I will give you rest – learn from me he says.** (Matthew 11:28) As the perfect prophet he spoke and taught with divine authority – no one could successfully accuse him of any wrong.

As the perfect priest Jesus willingly offered himself – his perfect sinless life was offer to us. He took our sins upon himself and paid for them by shedding his blood as a perfect payment. He died for us since the wages of sin is death. (cf. Romans 6:23)

Where did Jesus look for his strength to carry out this mission willingly and without complaint? His strength came from God. **7) Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. 8) He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! 9) It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me. Who is he that will condemn me? They will all wear out like a garment; the moths will eat them up.**

Jesus offered himself on purpose for us because he had the confidence that his heavenly Father would deliver him and rescue him. With full confidence that he would be glorified Jesus is willing to endure the shame of his trials and crucifixion on the cross. Men would falsely accuse him of many things – yet he would be vindicated – declared not guilty through his resurrection from the dead. With

confidence the Lord can confront his challengers silently knowing that in the end he will not be put to shame. The sovereign Lord would be his strength. He will stand at the last day – long after those who have accused him are dead and gone.

It is because Jesus purposely suffered for us that we also have the confidence that we too will stand unashamed before God on the last day and that no one will be able to accuse of wrong – you see Jesus took all our wrongs away – he gives us his innocence. The Apostle Paul's well known questions from Romans 8 reassure us of the fact that Jesus' work was for us. **Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34) Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36) As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38) For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39) neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** (Romans 8:33-39 NIV84)

In the final verse of our text the Lord himself calls out to us and encourages us to trust in the name of the Lord who won the victory completely for us. **Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.**

The awareness of our sins certainly fills us with fear in the presence of God. We are powerless to stand before the all powerful and holy God. The wicked man trembles before God. But those who by the power of the Holy Spirit have believed God's promise of salvation through Christ do not tremble in fear. They show their fear of God by doing what is right and shunning evil out of reverence for the Lord who has shown him a lost and condemned creature grace and received him as his child and heir. How can such a person sin and do wicked things? Let those who have such a fear of God put their trust in him – rely upon him and his word. That word brings comfort to the weary, that word sets prisoners free, opens the eyes of the blind, and brings true spiritual healing. That word guides and comforts us through the dark and dreary days which we must endure on this earth as we take up our crosses and follow Christ. **We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God** – we've all heard that passage. (cf. Acts 14:22) We've all used it help us accept and understand the difficulties of life. Often we use that passage to console ourselves with the thought that trials and tribulations must come. But there's more to it than that. We also use that passage correctly when we take from it the confidence that because of Christ's victory we must enter the kingdom of God – there will be no other outcome for the one whose confidence is in the Lord.

Trust in the name of the Lord. Rely on your God. These words from are Isaiah are best understood when we recall how the Lord our God revealed his name to Moses on Mt. Sinai: **Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. 6) And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7) maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."** (Exodus 34:5-7 NIV84)

With those words God proclaimed himself as the God of free and faithful grace, as a God above all other gods, as a God worthy of our fear, our praise and our trust. In this name there is complete hope and security – it's the name the Lord Jesus trusted and relied upon as he suffered willingly for us, offered himself on purpose for us and won the victory completely for us. Amen.