

Jesus Bears Our Grievs

Palm Sunday 2019

*Isaiah 52:13–53:12, Psalm 22, Philippians 2:5–11, Luke 23:1–49*

Today we've heard the story of the cross in the words of Luke. We've heard the Jesus' cry from the cross in the words of the Psalm. We've heard the spiritual act of the cross in the song of Isaiah. And we've heard the humiliation of the cross in the word of Paul.

Though we reflect upon the brutal suffering of our Savior, we must not think of Jesus as a helpless victim. As Brevard Childs has written, "What occurred was not some unfortunate tragedy of human history but actually formed the center of the divine plan for the redemption of his people and indeed of the world." Today we've heard the story of the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

He has seen our suffering. He has heard our cries. He has come to deliver us. God takes the weight of sin upon himself so that we might know the weight of glory. This story reveals the sacred humiliation of God in Christ. So sacred, so holy. That we pause, we kneel, we acknowledge the dreadful glory of such a moment. Though a singular moment in the history of humanity, the cross stands at the intersection of all time and space. Thus yesterday is not the day of salvation. Tomorrow is not the day of salvation. Today is the day of salvation.

We encounter the reality of this historical moment as present even now. Even now he has borne our griefs, even now he carries our sorrows. The Son of God who is our Eternal Now steps into human history through Jesus the Christ. Though the physical death of Jesus occurred over two thousand years ago, we turn to the Christ, the Son of God, in the present moment and we offer the bitter anguish of sin and death in exchange for the glory of life eternal.

Isaiah speaks of the mystery of this divine exchange. "He was pierced for our transgressions;

he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." Jesus is pierced, we are given peace. Jesus is crushed, we are healed. Jesus takes the death and pain and despair of sin upon himself, and we receive the forgiveness of God and His life giving Spirit in our lives.

Our readings give us a tiny glimpse of the overwhelming burden of sin and death. Jesus was despised and rejected. Not just at death, but throughout his whole ministry. In his life, he bears the rejection of humanity against God. He is misunderstood, he is cursed, he is threatened, he is betrayed, he is eventually killed. God has come among us and we've killed him.

He is not simply a prey of human wickedness, he is a revealer human wickedness. Even as Jesus is cursed, mocked, beaten, and crucified, we behold ourselves. We behold our capacity to reject God and curse His gracious gift of life and creation. Even as we are exposed as the very ones who rejected God in Christ, we are simultaneously offered the hope of redemption in His life poured out for us. Thus even as he bears the curse of humans turned from God, he pours out his life as the most holy gift from on high.

Today we celebrate the mystery of God's unrelenting gift of love in Christ. His love absorbs our death, overcomes death, and brings redeeming, restoring, resurrection life instead. We hear these words of hope in the middle of lives wrecked and racked by the grief of this world.

We grieve in our own failures to love rightly. We grieve over wrong words, wrong thoughts, wrong actions, and hearts quick to judge and to curse one another. We grieve over the pain we've known and our families have known in this world of sin. We grieve over the suffering that surrounds us and presses up against us. We grieve over friends who are dying. We grieve with families of those who have died.

We grieve over the children bound by anxiety and depression. We grieve over the children abandoned by parents or attacked by parents. We grieve over broken marriages. We grieve over broken hearts. We grieve for the suffering that plagues our nation. The angry passions that flare all around us. We grieve for the destructive grip of drug addiction upon many of our friends and neighbors. We grieve for those forgotten in prison at home and aboard. We grieve for the refugees fleeing persecution, poverty, and war that cover this broken planet.

Sometimes the weight of pain in the world can seem overwhelming, can feel like too much, too heavy, too painful, too common.

Today in the word of the cross, we hear the word of hope. "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows..." In a few moments, I will invite us to tangibly offer these griefs to God in Christ as an act of worship, an act of healing, an act of hope in his absolute and utter faithfulness. I've given you slips of paper where you can write down specific griefs that burden your heart, your friends, and your world. You can fold these slips and lay them at the foot of the cross in a moment. No one will read these slips. This is simply an opportunity for each of us to physically offer these areas to the Lord in his faithful love.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. - Is 53:4.

What are the griefs that weigh heavy on my soul?

What are the griefs that weigh heavy on my loved ones?

What are the griefs that weigh heavy on my world?