

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 4, 2009

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

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. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. 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. 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. 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! 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. 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. (NIV)

Ever play the game: *Who Am I?* If you enjoy games this one can be a lot of fun. It's pretty simple to play. All you do is give some details to describe someone, while others have to try to guess that person. For example if I said: "*I was put into a basket and placed into a river as a baby. God appeared to me once in a burning bush. I led the Israelites out of Egypt and was given the ten commandments on Mount Sinai. Who am I?*" Then you would all answer. (Go ahead & answer all together) I am (Moses).

Today, in God's Word before us, we are given a description of someone. This someone reveals exactly who He is to us through these details. Unlike our English which tells us when the subject changes, the Hebrew does not always identify the speaker but just assumes the readers understand the speaker has changed. So we are going to listen carefully to figure out who is speaking. Who is this person? Since this is God's Word it is much more important than a game. But I still pray we have fun digging into this Scripture and instead of asking *Who am I*, today I want us to focus on answering this question: **Who is God's obedient servant?**

Let's get right into the description and details. "*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.*" The Lord gave this servant of His an instructed tongue. He spoke God's Word. He knew exactly what to say, when to say it, and how to say it. He knew words that would sustain the weary soul. How could He preach God's Word so faithfully? He listened to and gave His attention to God's Word every day "*morning by morning.*" He knew what God said, what God wanted and He obeyed. Who is God's obedient servant?

Let's listen some more: "*The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. 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.*" The Lord opened the ears of His servant to know what He wanted Him to do. And this servant did it - He was not rebellious. He did it even though what He was asked to do was not easy - and that's a huge understatement! He did not draw back even

though it meant offering His back to those who would beat it. He would be whipped and flogged. He did not turn away from doing God's will even though it meant He would have those who would pull out the hairs on his beard. Such a thing in the ancient world meant to be disgraced and humiliated. He would be ridiculed, spit on and mocked. Yet, this servant of God offered His back and checks and did not hide His face. He willingly did all this. Who is God's obedient servant?

You guys are so smart I'm sure you have figured it out, but we will read these three descriptive verses from Isaiah that give us more on this servant. ***"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. 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! 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."*** This is someone who turns to the Lord for help, for strength, for all. He displays a perfect confidence that the work He does for God will accomplish what God wants. So He sets His face like flint - He is determined to carry out His mission. He will not be put to shame. He will be vindicated from all charges. No one can accuse this servant of doing anything wrong. He is sinless. He is perfect. He wants to face His accusers for they do not have anything on Him. All their false charges will no hold up in the end. No one can condemn Him. All His enemies will wear out like a garment. They will be tossed into the burning trash like old moth-eaten clothes. Who is God's obedient servant?

It is not Isaiah. He already admitted as much when he called himself an unclean man living among an unclean people. So that rules out the nation of Israel as well and so does reading any portion of the rest of Isaiah. There is not a prophet or king or disciple or apostle that would fit this entire description either. How about you and me? Has any one of us been God's perfectly obedient servant? Have we always done what the Lord has asked of us? Do we face suffering willingly, gladly, and without fear as long as God's will is done? Sadly no. Would our enemies have charges they could bring against us - sins they could point to? Sadly yes. Sadly there are many.

So I will ask once more who is God's obedient servant? It is Jesus, God's own Son. It is the One who walked the earth some 700 years after Isaiah. It is the Savior who was born for us who is Christ the Lord. Jesus listened to and spoke God's Word without fail. Jesus knows how to speak words that sustain the weary. God became man and Jesus obeyed God's laws - all of them. His obedience went much further than just keeping God's commands in our place. God's will was to crush Him. Jesus knew that God's will was for Him to take the punishment we deserve. So Jesus willingly endured the scorn and the shame of being beaten and ridiculed and spit upon and humiliated. He gladly endured the pain and agony of the cross. He remained perfectly obedient so that God's will was done - so that all sin would be paid for by His suffering & sacrifice. Jesus suffered and died even though His enemies did not have a single charge to bring against Him. All they had were false accusations, but the perfect Lamb of God knew He would not be put to shame. He trusted up to His last breath as Jesus said ***"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."*** On the third day when He rose from His grave He was vindicated. His mission was accomplished. His trust in the Lord's help did not fail. Salvation was won for the world. All who stand against Jesus will wear out like old, moth-eaten garments. Jesus clearly is God's obedient servant.

After God's obedient servant speaks giving us this detailed description of His work, the Lord asks: "***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.***" Knowing how Jesus lived for us and died for us and did it all of it willingly and gladly so we can enjoy, life, forgiveness, peace, and heaven, what other reaction could there be? How can we not want to fear love and trust in God and gladly obey His Word? How can we not want to listen each day to those words and promises that sustain the weary? How can we not trust in the Lord and rely on our God? For if God did not spare His own Son but gave him up for all of us, as Paul writes (Romans 8), will He not also graciously give us all things?

There is one *Who am I* that is far more important than any other. It is the one Jesus asked His disciples in our Gospel lesson this morning when He said "***who do you say am.***" Thank the Lord that like Peter we know the answer - that Jesus is the Christ - God's anointed servant - God's obedient servant. He obeyed from beginning to end. He obeyed for us - even though it meant His death on the cross. He obeyed so that none of our enemies can bring any charges against us any longer. Jesus obeyed so that our help can always be found in the Lord our God.

Because our eyes and ears have been opened and hearts have been changed by God's good news, now I have one more thing to ask you - one more *who am I* question. Who is God's obedient servant? I pray each one of us willing, gladly says: "*I am.*" Perfectly like Jesus - no not on this side of heaven. But now, because of God's love for us, we want to be like Jesus. We want to obey our God. We want to listen to our Savior who has done so much for us. We gladly take up our crosses to follow Him. For that is who I am. I am God's own child. I owe a debt of love I can never repay. I am His and He is mine. Truly "***blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it.***" (Luke 11) Amen.