**Summer sermon series: The Apostles’ Creed – Second Article – Jesus’ Humiliation**

**July 1, 2012 - Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY**

**Based on Isaiah 53:2-9 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**“Behold! The Lamb of God! He takes your sin away!”**

Can you imagine if the entire city of Radcliff, all 32,000 of its residents, were told, “You need to evacuate your homes, today!” Over 32,000 people in and around Colorado Springs, Colorado were forced to flee their homes last week. At this very moment fast moving wildfires still threaten these cities. The mayor of Colorado Springs was quoted as saying, “There was nothing left in some areas -- burned out foundations [of homes] that were just smoldering. It looked like a nuclear weapon had been dropped. It's as close to hell as I could imagine." With the excessive heat, no rain in sight these wildfires seem to roll wherever they please, bringing complete destruction.

Isn’t that like the sinful human will – by our very nature we as human beings want to do whatever we want to do and go wherever we want to go and say whatever we want to say? As Christians we are forced to battle against this fire that rages inside of our hearts and minds each and every day. Isaiah describes this sinful mentality in our lesson this morning. He wrote, “**We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.**” Doesn’t that accurately describe the human race – like a flock of sheep, unaware and helpless, foolish, drifting away blindly to their own destruction? Following our own impulses and desires, giving no thought to the spiritual dangers that surround us, absorbed in our own ways, absorbed by my troubles, my problems, my pains, my struggles, no time to think about anyone else. Lest we say, “I don’t do that, I don’t behave that way,” Isaiah says, **“We all…each of us…”** …he means me and you.

How do we go astray like sheep? I think that one of the areas that this especially true of each of us is with the bleating that comes from our mouths as sheep. James, the brother of our Lord Jesus, in his letter wrote, “**The tongue is a small part of the body, but makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.”** (3:5,6)

Let me ask you, who has offended you in the past week? You still know their name, and can still see their face, right? Was it a general contractor, a clerk at the store, your platoon leader or commanding officer, or a server at a restaurant or a rude customer, a friend or family member, a political ruling that you took as a personal attack? What about constructive criticism from someone who is honestly trying to help, but you took it a little too personally? Do you know what our God in heaven wills for us to do in those situations? He said, “A gentle answer turns away wrath. Speak the truth in love.” Jesus said, “Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Forgive as I have forgiven you.”

What have you said to those who offended you? Sometimes it’s nothing at all – you hold your tongue, but inside, a fire rages. It shows by your attitude, the way you ignore, the way you are short with that individual. And when it comes to constructive criticism we allow ourselves to fall into self-pity. Other times patience runs out the door and the lips are loosened like the drivers of NASCAR seeing the green flag and the tongue roars off, “Why should I be treated like this?” Yes, **“We all like sheep… each of us has turned to our way…”**

In Galatians 5 Paul describes the acts of the sinful nature, **“Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like.”** What’s interesting is that sins that are awful even in the eyes of society are lumped together with sins of the tongue and the sins of the heart – anger and hatred and selfishness. Paul goes on to say, **“I warn you that those who continue to live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God**.” God says, “Wandering sheep do not deserve to live in the safety of my heavenly sheep pen. You deserve to be punished, for your tongue of fire you ought to be sent to the eternal fires.”

What could we do to avoid this punishment? Could we earn peace with God by obeying his commandments better? No. **“We all have fallen short of God’s glory…”** Could we erase one sinful thought, one word, one action by suffering for it? No. Not even criminals remove the guilt from their record by spending years in prison or even by suffering capital punishment. They only suffer the penalty they deserve. So it is with us, wandering sheep.

Isaiah leads us by the hand to the Lamb of God, the Servant of the LORD, and shows us how he suffered and why he suffered.

In Vs2 Isaiah describes Jesus, “**He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him.”** A king was not born in a feeding trough, he did not live in a backwoods country town – Nazareth, can anything good come from there? Kings were not known as “the carpenter’s son.” There is nothing of high rank, wealth or power, nothing of what appeals to the eye of natural man as brilliant but humble and meek. Does the king of heaven and earth deserve this kind of life? No. But does he complain? No.

In Vs3 Isaiah describes Jesus’ association with people. He did not sit in the VIP booth at the chariot races with the politicians and princes with paparazzi snapping pictures, but “**he was despised and rejected**.” The prominent of society showed contempt for him, partially because of the people he hung out with: tax collectors, the prostitutes, the sick and demon possessed. Does a king willingly surround himself with the dregs of society? No. Does he complain because of his low societal status? No.

He **“is a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised.”** Isaiah literally says that suffering sought him out. Like the proverbial rain cloud that hovers over an individual’s head throughout their life. Hardships just seem to follow him wherever he goes. That was Jesus’ life. People had a low opinion of him because of it. Does he complain about his hardships? No.

In Vs4 Isaiah continues his theme of the suffering Lamb of God, “**Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.”** Jesus carried our sins away, but not just the sins, the consequence that accompanies them: the sorrow our poor choices bring us in body and soul, the pain, the guilt we feel because of our sins, the suffering of eternity that sin has brought upon us, death itself – Jesus carried those consequences in the physical wounds he endured and in his very soul and heart.

And so Isaiah says, “**We consider him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted.**” Stricken not by *Adonai*, the LORD of free grace and compassion, but by *Elohim* the Ruler and Judge of all the world. He is smitten by God – someone who is humiliated, crushed in the dirt, as if he had violated the majesty of LORD Almighty himself. The judgment of God has come upon him, but not because of his transgressions.

In Vs5,6 Isaiah says, “**He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed (pulverized in body and in soul) for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all**.” Is this fair? Is this not the greatest injustice the world has ever seen? Don’t individuals have to pay or suffer for their own evil deeds? We are the sheep deserving punishment. Yet the LORD, the God of free and faithful grace, does not punish us, but his Servant, the Lamb of God. He lays **“on him the iniquity of us all**” – the totality of God’s justice, all of our sins, all of our consequences, for every human being, laid upon Christ, the Lamb of God. The Lamb willingly takes upon himself your punishment. He is condemned as guilty. He is humiliated. He suffers. He is smitten by God Almighty. He feels the torment of the flames of hell burning at his soul. He is slaughtered. Not for his sins but for yours and mine.

In Vs7Isaiah continues to describe the suffering Lamb of God, “**He was oppressed and afflicted.”** *Oppressed* – this is the word used to describe the way the Egyptian task masters mistreated the Israelites in slavery – ruthless and brutal, showing no mercy. This is how the Lamb of God is treated, not for his sins, but for ours.

Vs8 Isaiah says, **“By oppression and judgment he was taken away.”** The prophet describes the violent force with which he was arrested and handed over to the governing authorities, the injustice of the court and the speed of the judicial action. **“…yet he does not open his mouth.”** How many of us, wrongfully accused, would stand up and vigorously defend ourselves? But the Lamb of God accepts his mistreatment without complaint. He shows considerable patience – the picture of the Lamb.

**“He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”** The people of Israel would understand this picture: thousands of sheep were brought to the temple on the Day of Atonement. One-year-old male lambs, perfect, without flaw, were brought before the priest, silent as the knife was drawn across the throat. Jesus does not resist arrest in Gethsemane, but willingly allowed them to lead him to Jerusalem, to the courts, to the whipping post, to the cross… He allows them to stretch out his arms and feet so that they might be nailed to the cross. He refuses the numbing drink, to suffer all the wrath and punishment of God and of hell itself. Not for his sins, but for ours. But Jesus does not open his mouth. When he does open his mouth…

…to his betrayer in the garden, he reaches out to him to repent. When he was nailed to the cross he did not react the way we as sinful human beings would react. He did not curse them. He did not promise revenge. He let go of his anger and left justice to God. As he was dying for the sins of the world he was offering a personal prayer for the spiritual welfare of his unbelieving executors, that they would see their sin and turn to him as their Savior, “**Father, forgive them**.” How many of us would do that in our final hours, dying as a martyr at the hands of evil men? Even as he was dying for us Jesus was also living for us, perfectly, completely, sinlessly. He lived as the righteous Lamb of God for us. **“He had done no wrong and no deceit was found in his mouth.”**

He has taken away your sin and mine. He has taken away the consequences of your sin and mine. You will not die for your sins, but live. The innocent one dies for the guilty ones to make them innocent. This is what the Lamb of God has done for you. He has washed the sheep in his blood. He has made his sheep pure and holy. Now go, and live as forgiven, holy lambs. Live for the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Amen.