

Isaiah 53 – “Preferred Pronouns”
Rock Island Circuit Tre Ore – March 29, 2024

What are your preferred pronouns? That question is but one piece of evidence that we live in a sinful, fallen world. It’s a question that denies reality and evades truth. That question is a rebellion not only against Creation, but also against our Creator. But it’s also a question which, when understood correctly, can guide us through these next three hours. For why are we here, after all? We are here, of course, to recount the awful pain and agony that our Lord experienced after He was unfairly tried, convicted, and punished in a sham of justice. But we are not here merely to recount facts from the past. For this historical reality of Christ’s passion also has personal ramifications for each of us. And here is where the pronouns come in. He did it **for us** and **because of us**. Or to make it even more personal, He did it **for me** and **because of me**. That is to say, I was the cause of His crucifixion; but because of who He is and what He did, I benefit from His crucifixion.

It is fitting that our three hours of meditation this afternoon begins with an emphasis on the great song of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. That servant is our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is we and me – all of us and each of us - whom He is serving. Even though we live centuries after the narrative detailing the facts that we are about to hear, we were involved in them. We were perpetrators, the cause of His suffering. The prophet/evangelist describes Him as One who was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Those sorrows occur whenever we transgress His holy Law, sin against Him or our neighbor and then decide that we know best; that our standards for living are more important than His. We blindly overlook our sin or make excuses, falsely thinking that He is either unaware of our transgressions, or is so loving and open-minded that He doesn’t care. We falsely think that a harsh word, a lustful thought, a selfish action; a failure to love Him and our neighbor is really no big deal.

But when we use those evasive tactics to give our conscience a short-term reprieve from the awareness and guilt of our sin, we really change the pronouns. Instead of *He was wounded for our (my) iniquities* it becomes *He was wounded for their iniquities*. Because, you see, I’m better. I wouldn’t do the terrible things other people do. We regard ourselves with a false and dangerous sense of self-righteousness.

But if we change the pronouns and say the cause for our Lord’s death belongs to others; then so does the benefit. If He was not wounded for our and my transgressions and crushed for our and my iniquities, then I’m not part of the we in “*with His stripes we are healed*.”

And if exclude ourselves from the *we* in the Suffering Servant passage, then we are also excluded from the *we* in the Hebrew 4, Great High Priest passage. And then we find no mercy and grace. And that is tragic. That’s why preferred pronouns are the pronouns used by Scripture to describe us as sinner, and Jesus as our Savior.

As the narrative of Christ passion unfolds from the Gospel of John these next hours, put yourself into the picture. You are not a passive onlooker, but an active participant. It happened because of you, but the benefits are for you. So we pray to the Lord mindful of the pronouns and their significance, “*Jesus I will ponder now on Your holy passion; with Your spirit me endow for such meditation. Grant that I in love and faith may the image cherish. Of Your suffering, pain and death. That I may not perish.*” Amen.

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