

Advent Reading for Tuesday, December 19, 2017 ***“Silent before His Accusers” (Isaiah 53:7-8)***

Today we continue in Isaiah 53, one of the most powerful descriptions of the sufferings of Christ found anywhere in Scripture: *“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?”* (53:7-8). Isaiah’s point is that the Servant would endure all of His undeserved sufferings without protest, being utterly submissive throughout the entire, horrific process.

In recording the historical event, the gospel writers agree that this was the case. *“The high priest stood up and said to Him, ‘Do you not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?’ But Jesus kept silent”* (Matthew 26:62-63). *“And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. Then Pilate said to Him, ‘Do you not hear how many things they testify against You?’ And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed”* (Matthew 27:12-14). *“Then when Pilate heard the statement that Jesus ought to die because He claimed to be the Son of God, he was even more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorian again and said to Jesus, ‘Where are You from?’ But Jesus gave him no answer”* (John 19:7-9).

Some years later, the Apostle Peter also affirmed Jesus’ silence in his suffering: *“And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously”* (I Peter 2:23).

But there is one other event which gives Isaiah’s prophecy even greater prominence. In the book of Acts is the riveting story of an Ethiopian who was a court official to the queen of the Ethiopians. He had made the long journey to Jerusalem to worship, but was returning home in his chariot, continuing to search for answers. An angel of the Lord had spoken to Phillip, instructing him to go to the desert road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza. It was not long before Phillip saw the chariot and the Ethiopian reading from the prophet Isaiah. Phillip asked if he understood what he was reading; the man responded that he needed someone to help

him, and he then invited Phillip to join him in the chariot. Now we turn to the text: *“Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: ‘HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO THE SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARERS IS SILENT, SO HE DID NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH. IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH’.* The eunuch answered Phillip and said, *‘Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?’* Then Phillip opened his mouth and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him” (Acts 8:32-35). The Ethiopian’s heart was obviously prepared for the gospel, and the Lord arranged a *divine appointment* so Phillip could share the gospel with him on a lonely desert road. The man soon placed his trust in Jesus, and declared his new faith by being baptized!

Giving Thanks – Thank You for reminding us that, in the ultimate sense of the word, all Scripture points to Jesus!