

## “The Deeply Despised Shall Be Highly Exalted”

St. John 19:35-36

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SERMON 1907

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The sermon text is from John 19:35-36, “And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. 36For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “Not one of His bones shall be broken.”

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The book of the Prophet Isaiah includes four Servant songs in which the promised Messiah is described. Today’s first reading from Isaiah 52:13-53:12, often called the Suffering Servant, is the fourth and most important of all of them. These verses are quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament passages. On this day, which the Lord has made, it is only appropriate that we examine **the prophesy about our Savior Jesus Christ and His fulfillment of it in St. John’s Passion account.**

In John’s gospel the beginning of Holy Week starts with chapter 12. It includes the anointing of Jesus at Lazarus’ house in Bethany and the Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem. When some Greeks came wanting to speak with Jesus, He announces,

“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.” And a little later He says, “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup>And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:23; 31-32).

Isaiah began his fourth song speaking about **the Messiah being lifted up.** Isaiah says, “Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high” (52:13). The crowd who had heard Jesus teaching, didn’t understand and asked, “How can you say ‘the Son of Man must be lifted up’?” This whole exchange and the resulting unbelief were foretold in Isaiah 53:1 and quoted by John 12:38, “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

**That revelation or Isaiah’s Gospel report is the topic for our sermon.** We need to see that the deeply despised One shall be the highly exalted One. Thus, by the revelation of the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus, we come to understand and believe in the mission of the Messiah.

The lifting up of Jesus begins when He is raised up above the earth on His cross. He continues to be lifted up by His resurrection and rising from the dead. And all exaltation comes to completion when Jesus is lifted up at His ascension to the right hand of the Father. However, before we can speak about the His being lifted up, **Isaiah describes just exactly who will be lifted up.** There have been many who have risen through the ranks to achieve a high position. Kings have conquered lands. Athletes have achieved crowns of victory. Scientists have made discoveries which have lifted

their names above others. Nevertheless, unlike the others, the Suffering Servant receives his lifting up for the reason that He was despised.

Judas considers Jesus to be worthless as a teacher and agrees to betray Him for a paltry sum of silver. Jesus has done nothing wrong and yet troops come to the garden of Gethsemane in order to arrest Him. The Israelite officer strikes Jesus' mouth with his hand for his words. Though Jesus has not spoken evil, his own nation despised Him and considered Him worship of death. Jesus speaks the truth, yet Pilate will not defend Him against these envious accusations. Pilate knew full well that Jesus was not a threat. Pilate, considers Jesus not worth preserving and willingly gives Him up to be crucified. After all, Pilate's job is on the line. Jesus is mockingly dressed in purple wearing a crown of thorns. The soldiers struck Him and beat him in hopes of appeasing the chief priests. Finally, Pilate delivers Jesus over to be crucified. Being placed between two criminals, He was treated like a criminal. His clothing was gambled away. He died a cursed man.

Isaiah's words sound as if he had witnessed the whole thing. Isaiah wrote, "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." (Isaiah 53:3, 4). John's Gospel tells us the Isaiah did see it all. John 12:41 says, "These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him." Not only did the nations consider Jesus despised, but they were sure that God did also. Isaiah 53:4 says, "Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted."

It is true for us, as well. When we do not make the hearing of the Word of God our first concern, we have despised the message of the Messiah. When we do not make use of the opportunities to attend services and preaching, we despise the revelation of God concerning our Savior from sin. If we do not hold the word sacred and gladly hear and learn it, then we must esteem something else to be of greater concern and value. Like Pilate we have chosen to hold to other things and hand over the Word to be sacrificed. We have been given the gift of prayer in Jesus' name. When we do not call upon it in every trouble, we are esteeming something else as more valuable and necessary than to call upon God's help. Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way" (53:6).

Let us return to Isaiah's suffering Servant song. He says, "Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider." Though the kings didn't see it at first, but rather considered Him to be despised by man and God. They did not come to "see." In acknowledgement of their utter failure to discern what we really going, they have shut their mouths. It would be like saying I will no longer spout off my opinions about things I do not understand. I will give my ear to hear and be taught.

What was it that brought them to "believe" the report? It was Jesus being highly exalted that made them reconsider their judgment. The resurrection of Jesus made them look differently at Jesus' suffering and death. When they saw that God had exalted Him and highly exalted Him and lifted Him very high, the people came to a different understanding.

They now knew that Jesus wasn't being punished for His sins. He wasn't rejected by God. Jesus wasn't a liar when He claimed to be the Son of God. When you put the death and the resurrection together you come to a different conclusion. When

you see that the One who was deeply despised is the One who was highly exalted, then the former understanding simply does not make sense. This man of sorrows and acquainted with grief was here on a mission and He came for a purpose. Isaiah said, “<sup>4</sup>Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-5).

**We now see that the entire account of St. John’s Passion is about the Son of God who became true man to purchase the forgiveness of our sins.** Jesus was the heavenly Father’s appointed high priest in order to cleanse us from our sins. Isaiah uses priestly language when he says in 52:15, “so shall He sprinkle many nations.” In fact, he was not stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted for His own sins. No, not at all. Isaiah said,

“...He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. <sup>10</sup>Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.”

There was a great purpose in God’s mind. Isaiah continues,

“When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”

We are God’s seed. Through faith in our Savior, we are Jesus’ offspring. Jesus’ work was done prudently. He actually prospered in bringing many people to salvation.

Isaiah says, “By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” All thanks be to God for revealing to us that Jesus was your right arm, accomplishing your purpose. We praise our Lord for giving us faith to believe your report. Through faith in Christ we are justified, that is declared righteous.

St. John tells us that His purpose in presenting to us our Lord’s Passion. “And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, **so that you may believe.** <sup>36</sup>**For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled...**” (John 19:35-36). Isaiah report concerning the suffering Servant let us know God’s will before it happened. St. John’s **Gospel report reveals to the will of God after it happened.** The deeply despised One was in the end highly exalted. By the revelation of the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus, we come to understand and believe in the mission of the Messiah.