

Sermons at
First Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Reggie Denton, Pastor

October 20, 2024 (Proper 24, Year B)
Isaiah 53:4-12
Mark 10:35-45

A story. A wealthy man and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had everything in their collection from Rembrandt's to Van Gogh's. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art. When the Vietnam War broke out, the son went to war. He was very courageous and died while saving the life of another soldier. The father was notified and grieved deeply for his only son.

Around Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood at the door with a large package in his hands. He said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier your son gave his life for. He saved the lives of many men that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet hit him in the chest and he was killed instantly. He often talked about you and your love for art."

The young man held out his package. "I know this isn't much, and I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would've wanted you to have this."

The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son painted by the young man. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son. The father was drawn to the eyes, and his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for it, but he said, "Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift."

The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time a visitor came, he directed them to the painting of his son, retelling the story before taking them to see any other works of art.

Eventually, the man died. There was to be a great auction of all his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited to see the vast collections of Picassos and Raphaels that the man had amassed and thrilled to have the opportunity to bid on the collection. But on the platform up front sat the painting of the son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "Who will start the bidding on the picture of the son? Who will bid for the son?"

There was silence. Then a voice from the back of the room said, "We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one."

But the auctioneer persisted. "Who will start the bidding, \$100, \$200?"

Another voice shouted angrily. "We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Rembrandts and Van Gogh's. Get on with the REAL bids!"

But still the auctioneer continued. "The son, the son! Who will take the son?"

Finally, a voice came from the back of the room. It was the longtime gardener of the man. "I'll give \$10 for the picture." He was a poor man, and it was all he could afford.

"We have \$10, who'll give \$20?"

Someone sneered, "Give it to him for \$10. Let's see the masters!"

"\$10 is the bid, won't someone bid \$20?" The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the picture of the son; they wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded his gavel.

"Sold for \$10!"

A man on the front row shouted "Now, let's get on with the collection."

But the auctioneer laid down his gavel. "I'm sorry, the auction is over."

"What about the paintings?", they shouted.

"I am sorry. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I wasn't allowed to reveal that stipulation until now. Only the painting of the son would be

auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including all the valuable paintings. The man who took the son gets everything."

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, also called the sons of thunder, had seen Jesus up on the mountain of Transfiguration. They'd had an advance viewing. They'd SEEN the MASTERS. They'd already caught a GLIMPSE of Jesus glory, and they wanted MORE, they wanted to be PART of it. "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you...Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left hand, IN your glory."

And Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking."

You see, you can take part in Jesus' glory, but first you need to take the Son. And this what HIS portrait looks like:

Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.

Why would James and John take THAT picture? Why would YOU and I take that picture? Why do WE take THIS picture (point to cross)? Because by his WOUNDS we are healed.

Luther called Christ's death the "Happy Exchange." Our Lord Jesus has life, and joy and hope; we have only death and sadness and despair. But as 2 Corinthians 8(:9) says, "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he BECAME poor, so that BY his poverty YOU might become rich." Jesus TOOK the WORST of what was ours, in order to GIVE us the BEST of what was his.

Jesus DIED to TAKE our sin and, in exchange, give us HIS righteousness. He died to TAKE our PAIN and give us HIS wholeness. He died to TAKE our suffering and, in its place, GIVE us healing. He died to take our DEATH, and give us HIS life, TRUE life now, and ETERNAL life to come. By HIS wounds WE are healed.

And it's a "happy exchange," not only because WE are happy to RECEIVE such a gift, but because HE is happy to GIVE it. It was his whole reason for COMING to this lost and broken world – to GIVE us what only HE could give.

In our Old Testament passage, Isaiah isn't JUST telling us about the suffering servant, he's telling us something about GOD. He's telling us that God loves us so dearly that God can't BEAR to see us hurting. God sees our pain, and suffers WITH us. And God COMES to us and MEETS us, RIGHT where we are, IN our grief, and IN our sadness, and IN our pain.

God gave his Son to die FOR US. Much like the auctioneer, God's message is, "The Son, who will take the Son?" Because, you see, whoever takes the SON gets EVERYTHING!

Every one of us has something broken in our lives, something we NEED healed. Jesus died to GIVE you that healing. "Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases...and by his WOUNDS we are HEALED." Amen.