



Sermon: Sunday, April 13, 2025

"The Sovereign Lord Who Helps Me"

SCRIPTURE: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 ¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. ¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ²⁰ So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Introduction: A Crisis of Faith

One of the hardest things for us as believers is understanding why good people suffer. If God is just and all-powerful, shouldn't He reward the righteous and punish the wicked? But, as we know, the world doesn't always work that way. Many wicked people seem to live comfortable, happy lives, while honest, good people face hardship and struggle. Does God ignore what's happening in the world? Or is He powerless to change things?

The faith of the Jewish people, who wrote the Old Testament, was shaped by this very struggle. The Israelites faced many extreme hardships throughout their history, even to the point of feeling abandoned by God. During the Babylonian captivity, many wondered if it was even worth continuing to believe in God. The author of today's text expresses his deep pain, saying, **"I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting."** (Isaiah 50:6)

This is a description of the suffering he endured—beaten with a whip, mocked, insulted, and humiliated. It's a painful scene of shame and suffering, and it reflects the despair of those in captivity, wondering if God would ever rescue them. The people were struggling to find hope or direction.

Body: People's Approval vs. God's Approval

In a situation like this, most people would simply give in to the pressure of reality. Isaiah understood this mindset, but he couldn't accept that God's people were turning away from Him. In Isaiah 50:2, he cries out, **"Why was no one there when I came? Why did no one answer when I called? Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?"**

Here, Isaiah is expressing his frustration with the people of Israel, who were losing their sense of identity and hope. Even during the darkest days of captivity, when their world seemed to be falling apart, the people continued to read the Word of God. But the Word didn't resonate with them because they were in despair. They couldn't see the power of God at work in their lives.

We may think that this story is only about the Israelites 2,600 years ago and doesn't relate to us today. But when we think about it, the challenges the Israelites faced are not so different from the challenges we face now. We live in a world filled with pressure just like they did. We face powerful forces that tell us we must chase after wealth, fame, and power. We are tempted to compromise, to lie, and to ignore justice and peace just to get ahead.

But Isaiah's response was different. He had **"the tongue of a teacher,"** and his ears were **"opened"** by the Lord (Isaiah 50:4-5). While most people were turning away from God, Isaiah was able to hear God's Word and boldly speak the truth, even when it was uncomfortable or dangerous. He wasn't afraid of the consequences, because he knew God was with him.

Isaiah also had confidence despite facing persecution. In verse 7, he says, **“The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.”** His confidence came from knowing that God was with him and that God would vindicate him. God, the righteous judge, had declared Isaiah to be in the right, even if the world rejected him.

I remember when I was younger, arguing with my siblings. If my parents took my side and told me I was right, it felt like everything was okay. That’s the kind of confidence Isaiah had.

When God acknowledges us as righteous, no matter how the world criticizes or opposes us, we can stand firm. Our confidence doesn’t come from people's approval, but from God's affirmation.

But this isn’t always easy. We often feel more certain about getting approval from others. We live in a world that values what people think more than what God thinks. So, it takes work to close the gap between wanting to be recognized by others and wanting to be recognized by God. The more we focus on God’s approval, the less we’ll be swayed by the world.

Conclusion: Isaiah’s Prophecy Fulfilled in Jesus

In Matthew 26, during the Passover Supper, Jesus shared bread with His disciples and said, **“Take, eat; this is my body.”** He also gave them wine and said, **“Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”**

Jesus’ death on the cross is the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise to forgive our sins and declare us righteous. The cross shows us that God doesn’t just take our side but removes our sins and makes us right with Him. Jesus’ resurrection confirms that we are forgiven and accepted by God.

Today is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week, when we remember Jesus' final days before His death on the cross. He endured insults, beatings, and the ultimate humiliation, but He was righteous, and through His death, He made it possible for us to be declared righteous by God. The prophecy from Isaiah, **“He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me?”** was fulfilled through Jesus. His death and resurrection show that God is with us, helping us, and giving us the strength to stand firm, even in the face of worldly pressures.

As Christians, we are people who have the life of Jesus within us. This life is far greater than anything the world can offer. I pray that the life of Christ will overflow in us and that we will stand confidently in His righteousness, no matter what the world says. **Amen!**