How Deep the Wounds Memory Verse: Isaiah 53:5

March 17th, 2024 Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53:1-11

SLIDE 1: TITLE

*How Deep the Father’s Love for Us.* This has been our theme throughout our Lenten journey. We have talked through the incredible depth of God’s love on one side of the coin and the incredible depth of our sin on the other. And the thing we need to understand is what happens when God’s incredible love come into contact with our detestable sin. Sin cannot stand, it must be destroyed. The very nature of God’s love means he hates sin. It is no small matter. We must take stock and see our sin for what it is. That is one of the reasons we undertake this journey of Lent. Last week the sermon was entitled, “How Deep the Father’s Loss” and in it, we attempted to see the ordeal of the cross from God the Father’s perspective. In Jesus’ death all the sins of the world and all the wrath mankind deserved fell upon his only begotten Son. That’s how deep the Father’s love is for us. And Jesus had to hang on the cross completely alone, enduring his Heavenly Father turning away, experiencing the separation of sin, but it was not his sin…as we sing in the song, “It was my sin that held him there…” He took on my punishment, and paid the price that I could never pay.

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If you have not been here the last few weeks or heard our previous sermons, let me just say that things are starting to rachet up in intensity. Events are building up as we approach Easter. So today is not necessarily a cheery on as we look at the cross from the perspective of Jesus himself and contemplate, “How Deep the Wounds”. This is not an enjoyable place to be or topic to consider – but it is necessary to remain here, at least momentarily…are you ready for that?

Many of us have had experience with wounds. To be alive in these human bodies means we will sustain some wounds from time to time.

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They might be inflicted by the hands of a surgeon, an unexpected accident, as a result of some disorder or disease, or due to negligence and unwise decisions. Case in point: When I was younger, still living at home, I used to deftly jump over the back of my parents couch and land in a perfectly reclined position all ready to watch TV. On one fateful day, for whatever reason, my mother had placed a step stool behind the couch in my normal launching spot. Upon seeing the stool, I took it as an opportunity to reach new heights. After a little running start, I planted my foot on the top step of the stool and hurtled myself into the air. The next thing I knew was crippling pain and gushing blood. I had forgotten about the decorative arch that separated the living room from the dining room. Basically, I had launched myself directly into the edge of a wall. Ice pack, ER, stiches. A head wound received from carelessness. The chief characteristic of being wounded is experiencing pain.

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It hurts! God created us with receptors in our brain that receive signals from our injury that cause us to feel pain. Pain is never fun. From stubbing our toe to bashing our heads, pain is a terrible consequence of being human. And Jesus, the One who by rights should never experience pain, took on that terrible consequence.

In Philippians 2, we learn that Jesus gave up his full claim to divinity…he emptied himself…he demoted himself to be born as one of us…to enter into a world of pain. As he grew, I presume he sustained the typical childhood injuries, cuts and scrapes and bruises. He ran to his mother for comfort and she would lovingly care for him. As a carpenter, Jesus would have been well acquainted with slivers and scars and slips of the blade. He knew what it was to have aching muscles and tired feet. And all this pain, every moment of it, was undeserved. Every headache, every knot in his shoulders, every labored breath was a form of suffering that, by rights, he should never have had to experience.

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Jesus also knew that the time was coming when he would have to go to the cross. He was familiar with this Roman method of execution, he knew what was involved, but Jesus is clear. In John 10 Jesus compares himself to a good shepherd, so good that he is willing to lay down his life for his sheep. In verse 17, Jesus says, “This is why the Father loves me: I give up my life so that I can take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I give it up because I want to. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it up again. I received this command from my Father.” This is the love of our Savoir, a self-sacrificing love that knows full well what is at stake, and yet freely gives himself. These words, when he spoke them, caused many who heard them to conclude that Jesus had clearly lost his mind, that he was demon possessed. Why would anyone talk this way? Why would someone willingly die in this manner? Even the Romans would not execute their own citizens in this way. The cross was reserved for slaves and foreigners – the lowest of the low…yet it is the way of God’s chosen one. The head wound that I received from my impulsiveness, I would never knowingly sustain such an injury…but Jesus, for the sake of his sheep, and with Isaiah chapter 53 in mind, willingly takes on the brutality of the cross.

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We must remember Rome was a superpower at the time. Their reign was vast and far reaching and they kept the peace largely by way of intimidation. They had a knack for making an example of those who were condemned to death. A cross is a fairly cheap way for the Empire to make a public spectacle out of criminals. Spectacle was key…Rome wanted this method of punishment to haunt the imaginations of anyone who might plotting a crime or disrupting the peace that they had established. A crucifixion was also designed to humiliate the condemned. There was no dignity to be had here. For decency’s sake, we always picture Jesus with a lion cloth tied around his middle, but that would not have truly been the case. Humiliation and degradation was half the point. The other half was torture – long, drawn out, slow-coming death.

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But before ascending the mound to be crucified, Jesus was mocked. The guards placed a purple robe upon him and a crown of thorns upon his head. They were more correct than they knew as they referred to him as the king of the Jews. Jesus was beaten. The standard method involved a leather whip that had pieces of metal and sharp bone woven into the straps. This was a maniacal weapon and each impact would tear deeply into the skin. After 40 blows, Jesus’ wounds would have easily exposed his bones.

Jesus is then forced to carry his own cross up the hillside to Golgotha, the place of the skull. There he is attached to the cross with nails driven into his hands and feet. The Romans soldiers then raised the cross upright and let it fall into a prepared footing. And there our Savior was lifted up. His words from John 12:32 came true: “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.”

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When we sustain a wound, we know that we are in for a long road to recovery. This is a slow process that tests our patience. We always tell people to get well soon. Hopefully recovery does not take too long. But Jesus, as he hung on the cross, waited, not for recovery, but for death. As mentioned, crucifixion was a slow, drawn-out procedure, one that could actually take days to complete. On the cross, one actually dies from asphyxiation or potentially a heart attack. As you hang from the cross, you cannot breathe. Your body weight, hanging vertically on your chest is simply too great and you would be unable to catch a breath. So Jesus would have to lift himself up by his nailed feet, scraping his mangled back on the rough wooden beam as he did so, then suck in a quick breath, and collapse down again. Eventually, one’s legs would give out, the lungs would no longer be able to get oxygen. This then would cause the acidity of the blood to increase, leading to an irregular heartbeat and eventually cardiac arrest.

Because Jesus was crucified on a Friday, and the Jews were gearing up to celebrate the Passover on that Saturday, they needed to expedite the process. They needed to make sure things were all wrapped up because having bodies hang around would be unclean on God’s holy day. So the soldiers came with a heavy cudgel to be used to break the legs of those crucified. In this way, they would be unable to prop themselves up to breath and would expire in time for the Jewish people to get to their Passover commemorating their redemption from Egyptian slavery centuries ago. Ironically, what was actually occurring in their midst, the death of the Son of God, would enact the redemption of all mankind from slavery to sin. As the soldiers came to Jesus to break his legs, they found that he had already died. He was too far gone…he had been overcome by the depth of his wounds. One of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus’ side to make doubly sure. Because Jesus has undergone such physical torment, he may have developed what’s called a pericardial effusion, a buildup of fluid around his heart as well as his lungs. When the spear went in, blood and water poured out.

Jesus died with forgiveness on his lips and the Psalms in his heart. He quotes Psalm 32:5 “Into Your hand I entrust my spirit…” The whole verse says, “Into your hands I entrust my Spirit, you redeem me LORD, God of truth.”

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Redemption. This is God’s goal, the reason for all his acts: to redeem his people…from Egypt, from slavery, from sin and from death. As the wounds of Jesus overcome his life, as his breath is stolen from his weakened body, as darkness claims the light of his eyes, Jesus commits himself to the Father, in order that he might be redeemed. From within the depth of his wounds, the Redeemer was himself redeemed and the way to God was opened to all who would place their trust in that redemption.

“Into your hands I entrust my spirit…” The song of David became the prayer of Jesus…and I would argue, it can be our song of prayer as well. People everywhere are seeking redemption in a myriad of ways; through amassing great wealth, to striving for notoriety, from escaping into hobbies and substances, to a self-loathing that recognizes our plight. We want to live, but we know it all comes to an end. We need to be saved! We need to find a way out!

Thank God that, when it comes to our wounds, we are blessed with bodies that can recover. Thanks God that our waiting ends with a restored body. I cracked my head, I received some stiches, I made sure it stayed relatively clean and I did nothing else. I simply had to wait for my body to heal. Eventually my wound closed, my stiches were removed…I don’t really even have a scar to show for my trouble. I may give definition to the meaning of the phrase “thick-skulled” but I was able to recover as good as new.

But Jesus never did find healing for his wounds. Indeed, recall the story of doubting Thomas. A bit of a spoiler alert here; but three days after Jesus had been crucified, the disciples claimed to have seen him alive again. John tells us the story in chapter 20 READ 24-28.

Now the New Testament assures us that our resurrected bodies will be perfected and incorruptible. Whatever infirmities we might live with now, on the other side of this life, we will be made whole. We will be raised into new life with a new body to match. When Jesus appeared after his resurrection, he was not disfigured and bruised and broken. Apparently, the stripes upon his back were healed, but hear this: the eternal, resurrected body of our Lord and Savoir is a wounded body;

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a body that can be seen and touched, with deep wounds that will never heal. The holes in his hands, the gash in his side remain as eternal remainder of the price God was willing to pay for you and for me. As we sing, “The wounds which mar the Chosen one”…well, they mar him still.

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Isaiah 53:5 boldy declares: by his wounds we are healed. In this life we usually experience a slow recovery from physical ailments, but in the life to come, we find healing in the deep wounds of our Savior, healing we could never achieve on our own, healing that can only come from the hand of our merciful God. God has told us all along, since he gave the law back in Leviticus, “Life is in the blood.” Jesus wounds give us access to eternal life. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. By faith the lifeblood of Christ is applied to us; by faith it is his blood that runs in these veins for it is by his deep wounds, his eternal wounds that we are healed. Amen!