

Good Friday - Chief Service
15 April, Anno Domini 2022
Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The prophet Isaiah paints for us one of the most vivid pictures of our Savior in all of Scripture. It is jarring not because it is gory but because reason can't believe what is being done to God's Son. It is offensive because we don't want to believe that such wretched treatment of our Savior is necessary. This is why the crucifix is so offensive to many. Nonetheless, viewed through the eyes of faith, there is nothing more beautiful in all of creation than this marred and stricken Jesus. Indeed, the true beauty of our Lord is just how ugly and wretched He allowed Himself to be made and how deeply He was willing to suffer.

And how could He be anything else? Is there anything uglier than humanity? While the animal kingdom may be excused for its ugliness and brutality, what excuse do we have? We were once the beautiful crown of all God's creation. We were once perfectly holy and righteous. But we threw all that away for a lie. We thought there was something more beautiful than to be made in God's holy image. And now there is nothing more vile to look upon than human nature. From the womb, to the streets, to the battlefield, to the deathbed, men are all too eager to slaughter one another in cold blood. We rejoice in the downfall and suffering of our neighbor. We take pride in our ability to welcome and applaud ever more twisted sexual perversions. Our mouths are filled with all kinds of cruel, vindictive, hateful, disrespectful speech.

"Ah, but look out our progress! Look how far we have advanced!" We vainly parade around trying to convince the world that we are beautiful. We put on masks to look like we are good people. But the reality is that we are an ugly people who no longer look anything like the God of love and compassion who made us. God had every right to turn away from us in disgust and never look at us again. There is nothing beautiful about us. Nothing regal. Nothing to make God desire us. At best we can put on a pretty veneer. But the truth remains. We are a horrific sight. And what is worse is we would call it this wretchedness beautiful.

But, O wondrous Love! God did not turn away from us or despise our ugliness because that would have meant certain death for us. God loved us. That is His character. His love meant that He couldn't just sit by and watch as the whole human race was lost in damnation. And there is only one way by which we can be saved. We must look upon God's Son, marred and beaten and spit upon. We must first confront the truth of our own ugliness. We must see Jesus bruised by the reed, torn apart by the scourges, bruised and swollen from the punching, pierced by the nails, crying out to God as the one who has been completely forsaken and in that see the great damage that our sin has done. We must see the head of God's Son fall to His chest as life left Him and see the truth that we are completely and utterly dead in our sin and our trespasses, that there is nothing at good in our sinful flesh. We must behold the man who was as we should be in life - holy and righteous and good - and was as we deserve to be in His death - marred beyond semblance, a worm and not a man, ugly, stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

If you walk in the delusion that apart from Christ you are beautiful, then you will be among those who are baffled by the cross and ashamed of it. If you say you have no sin or that your sin is not so bad, you deceive yourself and the truth is not in you and you will hide your face from Good Friday and desperately look for a prettier more regal and palatable Jesus. If you are right and your sin is not so ugly, then why is God's Son made to be? Repent.

The stripes, the bruises, the Blood - it was all for you. The Son of God, fairest among the children of men beautiful for holiness, became ugliness, became your sin for you, so that He might make you like Himself, beautiful. The ugliness of Christ is rightfully yours. But He would have it no other way. He would gladly bear it a thousand times over if necessary. Your griefs and sorrows are His so that you might know the joy and gladness of peace with God and the complete forgiveness of all your sins. God laid your iniquity on Jesus and in turn laid the beauty of Christ's righteousness upon you so that you could be made a child and heir. Christ Jesus was cut off and forsaken by God so that you would be brought near to God and might confidently seek every good and perfect gift from Him.

Such is the will of the Lord, to crush the faithful Lamb that the wandering sheep might be gathered back to the fold and saved. In Jesus, you have

been made beautiful again because for you, Jesus was made ugly. Now the Father is pleased to lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. But this beauty is not the beauty of the world. Like your Savior, your beauty is hidden under great weakness and even death itself. For when the world beholds God's children all they can see is foolishness and humiliation. They see meekness and poverty. They see sacrifice. They see shame. They wag their heads in derision. It doesn't matter. They are wrong. They are blind. One day the radiance of God's children will be revealed and the world will be put to shame. Don't seek the world's beauty. It is only death. Embrace instead the beauty of the Crucified, the shining beauty of God's compassion.

In the Name of +Jesus.