ISAIAH 53:7-9
THE CHOSEN AND PRUDENT SERVANT --

From March 15, Isaiah 53:4-6 ---SUFFERS OUR PUNISHMENT IN OUR PLACE

Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
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.
All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

FOR TODAY, Isaiah 53:7-9 --SUFFERS MEEKLY, EVEN TO DEATH

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

And they made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.

We continue our midweek Lenten study of the last verses of Isaiah 52 and the entire chapter of Isaiah 53. Isaiah foresaw the miraculous rescue of God's people from captivity--not just from physical captivity to Babylon, but from captivity to sin and its curse, and from Satan and his cohorts. This rescue mission would be carried out by God's chosen, prudent Servant. The Servant was His eternal, precious Son. He would be cast down and humiliated, beaten and defeated, pierced (perforated) and bruised, at the hands of hateful men manipulated by the devil. Yet at the same time He was in fact being punished by the Father for man's, for your, rebellious and careless ways.

We heard Isaiah say He was *stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 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.* He was our Substitute to the lowest depths.

Today we see how meekly He endured all this, even to its ultimate end--His death.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted. The thought of the Servant being "wounded-stricken-smitten" is carried furher with Isaiah saying He was *oppressed.* The Hebrew word "oppressed" was used in I Samuel 13:6. The Israelite soldiers were "oppressed" bt the Philistine army, which was gathering around them with everything they had. Nowhere to turn! In I Samuel 14:24 the Israelite soldiers were "oppressed" again, harassed and wearied—not from an army, but from hunger. King Saul had sworn a foolish oath to God that no one would eat until the battle was done. Hunger for the men! Have you ever been oppressed by hunger, weary from hunger, needing quick nourishment? It's a helpless feeling. Thus Jesus was wearied and oppressed in every sense. There was no "out" for Him. He could not complete the task of carrying His cross to Calvary! Isaiah says He was **afflicted—"**belabored." Just as the Israelites were to "afflict" their souls on the Day of Atonement—to realize the plight of their guilt, fasting likely included, so Jesus was "afflicted" for us and our guilt.

In all this ***He opened not His mouth.*** He never once asked for help—although as He had told Peter in the Garden, if He wanted He could call on His Father for more than twelve legions (80,000) of angels! Nor did He, while on the cross, ask for a drink of water, until the three hours of darkness (in which He was abandoned by the Father) were over.

Jesus suffered meekly. ***He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.*** He let the enemies and Satan himself afflict Him. He followed along as if naïve to all that was about to happen--which He was not. He had told His disciples three times that He would be betrayed, rejected, humiliated, and crucified—and the third day rise again. But they didn't get it. As **if** a naïve lamb being lead to the slaughter, He followed along meekly.. I wonder how many times the Israelites hadn't seen in real life a meek lamb being lead to its sacrificial death. Did it touch the hearts of the offer-er? Does Jesus' meekness in His sacrificial death for you, touch your heart? Let it not be just in feeling sorry for Him, but in love for Him who loved you so much.

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. I have been told by one of our own sheepmen, that indeed at sheering time, a sheep is propped up on its buttocks. The sheerer, beginning at the abdomen, works to sheer the wool all the way around so that it comes off in one piece. Meanwhile the sheep never once bleats, but lets the sheerer have his way. Jesus meekly let the enemies and Satan have their way. He did not cry out. He did not ask for help. Why do people not cry out? So as not to give the enemies the satisfaction of hearing them beg. So would be the case with Jesus. Other times because it won't do any good anyway. But in Jesus case, He did not want it to do any good. He came to be punished alone for our sins. He did not want any aid. In Him our record is clear. You are forgiven!

He was taken from prison and from judgment, He was taken—snatched away—from the security, and the safety, of "due process." He was taken away from the possibility of being found innocent. The enemies were going to find Him guilty! How many travesties of justice were there in just His trial before the High Priest? -- Taken to trial at night, asked to tell of His own teachings, false witnesses brought in, no two witnesses agreed, the high priesg tore his own robes as if in shock and dismay—which the high priest was forbidden to do, physically mistreated with the court's approval, ***Take from judgment.***

Who will declare His generation? The Hebrew is difficult. Either, "Who can speak of the continuation of His life?" for He would die! His own life would not continue, nor would His life continue through descendants, as if He were a man who would marry and have a family. OR, "Who of His generation will "declare" for Him, speak for, Him?" Either way, the point is the same. There is no one to act in His behalf, thus He will die. He will indeed suffer beyond the limits of life.

He was cut off from the land of the living. Jesus died—was cut off from life--because of the sins of the world which He was carrying. It's similar to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After sin, they were cut off from the land of the living. They and their descendants would die. Sin causes death. Also, they were also driven from the Garden and its Tree of Life, lest they eat of it and live forever in sin. *They were cut off from the Land of the Living.* You and I are cut off from the land of the living as well. We physically die. Likewise spiritually we are dead in our trespasses and sins before God. ***For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.*** Just as God "struck" Egypt with plagues, just as God struck Jacob's hip so that Jacob had to let go when he was wrestling with the Lord, so the Servant was struck by God with the suffering and death for sin. It is we who should be stricken for our transgressions and sins. But in mercy, God struck Jesus instead.

They made His grave with the wicked. His enemies had every intent of making Him look as evil as they could. He would die like a criminal and be disposed of like a criminal. He did die like us—like a sinner—and was about to be buried. Sin brings death. When death comes the sinner is disposed of. The sinner's body is useless—dead—in fact will become unpleasant to look at or smell. It is buried as is done with useless garbage and waste. Jesus became garbage for us.

But with the rich at His death! Jesus would not be buried in dishonor as any criminal! Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, would step forward to provide a burial with honor. Jesus was buried in Joseph's own new tomb—where there was no stench of death. (More than one body was typically put in a tomb.) He was given a respectful Jewish burial, wrapped in spices and linens. ***He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.*** The bitter price due for sin had been exacted from the Servant and the Father now honors Him in His burial. He had not come to hurt, harm, and do violence. That is the devil's way. He had not come to lie and deceive. That is also the devil's way. He had come to rescue. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Your eternal life!

Meekly, like Jesus, bow your heads in repentance. With meek love in your hearts for the Savior, bury your Christian dead with Christian honor. No matter how simple the ceremony or grave. Christ has redeemed us,body and soul from sin, death, and the grave. You will rise again! You have been rescued by the meek and loving Servant!

So be it! Amen! Pastor Kanzenbach---