

## Isaiah 50:4-10

The American Indians had an interesting way of naming their children (so we're told). After a child was born, the father would go out and lift up his eyes. The first thing that would meet his gaze would become the name of his child. Thus, Sitting Bull was named, as was Crazy Horse, and Flying Eagle.

Using a technique somewhat similar to this, we could pull some rather interesting names out of our text in Isaiah 50. The Prophet Isaiah is gazing, by the power of the Holy Spirit, upon the Promised Messiah, our Suffering Servant. He speaks of Him in our text as Jesus speaks through him. He foresees what Jesus would say and do, and what would be done to Him.

A number of interesting names can be seen here. In verse 4 we meet "him who is weary." I suppose an Indian father might have named his son this had he seen his neighbor lying down by his teepee. But with Jesus, this name has a different sense to it. Also in verse 4 we meet "the tongue of those who are taught." In verse 6 we see "him who strikes," and "him who pulls out the beard." An Indian boy with either of these names would likely have been someone that people feared. And then down in verse 10 we meet "him who walks in darkness." Any Indian boy born at night could have been given this name.

Here's a question: where are we in this list of names? I know what our name used to be...the last one on the list - "he, or she, who walks in darkness." That was us, if we are willing to admit it. If we're not, then it's still our name. To walk in darkness is the way of those who do not know the Lord. This includes those "who strike" and "who pull out the beard," as well as those who would never injure their neighbor, yet are living in unbelief. Christ is the true Light. Only those who abide in Him, and He in them, "*walk in the light as He is in the light.*" When you were born, you came out of the darkness of the womb into the light. So also, when you were born again in Holy Baptism, God brought you out of the darkness of sin and spiritual death into His marvelous light in Christ.

How do we stay there? Because I'll admit to you that my sinful flesh prefers the darkness. Doesn't yours? I am well aware of the sins I have done, even if no one else is, and because I am weak, I keep being drawn back to those dark sins of mine.

It's a real battle - struggling with sin and temptation. This brings us to our second name. We who used to be "he, or she, who walks in darkness," now because we walk in the light, but struggle to stay there, can be called, in verse 4, "he, or she, who is weary."

It's a real burden. It would be much easier to walk in darkness; not having to strive with sin. Living faithfully as a Christian does make us weary. Satan sees to it. It's much easier to go with the flow. Have you ever tried to push through a crowd that was going in the opposite direction? Were you tempted to give up the struggle and just let the crowd take you where it was going?

That's happening today. Most of the crowd of people around us - at work, at school, in our neighborhood - is all pushing in the same direction. They don't push toward church on Sunday mornings. They don't push toward the Word of God at all. They don't push in the direction of

the light of Christ. They are pushing in the other direction. And here we are fighting the crowd. We become, as Isaiah puts it, “him who is weary.” You need encouragement, and so do I. You need to be strengthened. You need your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to keep struggling with you. You need Him who “*set His face like a flint.*”

Jesus pushed through the crowd. And He was all by Himself. He pushed forward to the cross of Calvary even though He was the only one heading in that direction. They all pushed against Him. Peter, His faithful disciple, rebuked Jesus for going the wrong way. The others, too, were against Jesus. They wanted to walk in the way of glory, but Jesus chose to walk in the way of suffering.

But He would not be deterred. And so Jesus we could say - as Isaiah says in verse 7 - is “He who has set His face like a flint.” He was a rock. Determined, unwilling to back away. He was met by “those who strike the back,” and “those who pull out the beard.” Can you imagine the pain? If you have a beard, or a back, you can. But Jesus’ face was flint rock. Nothing could keep Him from suffering and dying on the cross for you and me.

And so now Jesus is able “*to sustain with His Word him who is weary.*” He’s been there. He’s done it. He made a path through the opposition. Not for you to follow that path by your own power...for Him to lead you in that path. No, it’s not the way of glory, riches, and honor. It’s the way of suffering. But it’s the way of Christ your light. It’s the way of life.

Jesus is well aware that you and I have given up so many times. We’ve turned back toward the darkness and gone with the crowd. Is He angry? No. He forgives you. Believe this with all your heart, for it is true. However dark your path has been; however full of sin, and weakness, and shame, Jesus does not reject you for it. You are completely forgiven. You will be called “him who is weary” all your life, for the battle with sin continues as long as we live. But your sins cannot condemn you. They are forgiven. Remember your baptism. You are joined there to Christ, always.

Even though you will be called “him who is weary,” all your life, because all your life you will struggle with sin and temptation -- you are also called in verse 4 “him who is taught.” Jesus was taught suffering by giving Himself up for you. Now you are taught to trust, to lean on Him continually. You are taught that the sins of your past cannot separate you from Christ your light no matter how dark they are. You are taught that it’s okay to be weary because Jesus is your strength; because He who endured to the end for you will keep you safe with Him to the end.

So maybe an Indian child was named after his father lifted up his eyes to see what would meet his gaze. Lift up your eyes. See the baptismal font before you. See the Sacrament on the altar. See the cross upon which the Savior died for you. And thus you, dear Christian, are named -- through Christ your Lord, your Light. Amen.