

Sunday, September 15, 2024 – Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a

The Suffering Servant is one of the most powerful images in Isaiah.

The most well-known of these passages is found in Isaiah 53.

He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities;

upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. (verse 5)

Christians find these passages to be a prophecy of Jesus.

6 - 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.

7 - The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced;

I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

8 - He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me?

9 - It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

When have you set your face like flint? What has made you able to do that?

Cf. Romans 8: 31 – If God is for us, who is against us?

Psalm: Psalm 116:1-9

3 - The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave came upon me.

4 - Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray you, save my life."

8 - You have rescued my life from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling.

12 - What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?

Matthew 14: 30 – When Peter noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

When have you experienced something like the above?

Second Reading: James 3: 1-12

These verses continue the theme from James 1: 26 – If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues, their religion is worthless.

1 - Not many of you should become teachers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

With greater authority and responsibility comes greater accountability.

Cf. Numbers 20: 9-13 – Because Moses lost his cool, disobeyed God, and took credit for bringing water out of a rock, he could not enter the promised land.

3-5a - If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

5b-6a - How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire.

The Park Fire was ignited when someone allegedly pushed a burning car off an embankment and then allowed it to fall into a ravine.

It was the largest wildfire of California's 2024 wildfire season, the fourth largest fire in California history, and the largest fire ever in California that was caused by arson. Thousands of people were evacuated, 709 buildings were destroyed, 430,000 acres burned, and it cost \$306 million to fight the fire.

6b-10 - The tongue stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing.

11-12 – Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? Can a fig tree yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Gospel: Mark 8:27-38

The most important question in life is, "Who do you say that Jesus is?"

27-30 - Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Matthew 16: 17-19 – Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom."

*Who or what is the rock on which Jesus will build His Church?
Peter? Peter's faith? God's revelation of himself through Jesus Christ?*

31-33 - Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Matthew 16 does not include "He called the crowd"

34 - He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

*To be a follower of Jesus, I must do three things –
Deny myself – take up my cross – follow Jesus
What does it mean to deny yourself?
What does it mean to take up your cross?*

35-37 - Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

Jim Elliot - "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."