

April 3, 2015
Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Good Friday B
ALL

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Crucified King. Amen.

It is pronounced *kol* in Hebrew, *pas* in Greek, *omnis* in Latin, *alles* in German, *todos* in Spanish, *tout* in French, and *all-ya'll* in Texan. It's the most superlative word in any language. What is it? A-L-L, all. Its siblings include total, complete, entire, and everything. Country cousins are called the whole hog, the whole shebang, whole enchilada and the whole ball of wax.

All. It is the most superlative word for the most superlative section in the Old Testament, the Fourth Servant Song of Isaiah, our text for today. He had it all. Our text in Isaiah 52:13 states, *"See, My Servant will act wisely; He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted."* The Hebrew verbs translated "raised" and "lifted up" are used to describe only one other person in Isaiah, and that's the King the prophet sees in 6:1: *"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne high and lifted up."* This Lord receives the cry of the Seraphim in verse 3: *"Holy, holy, holy."* In verse 5 the prophet calls Him, *"The King, the Lord of armies."* The Servant and the Lord are one and the same. This is a mystery not fully articulated until Jesus says in John 10:30, *"I and the Father are one."* This Servant had it all.

He would not it, because the Fourth Servant Song—composed by Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century—was originally intended for sixth century exiles who were singing another song, Psalm 137:4: *"How can we sing the songs of Zion while in a foreign land?"* They were there because of their addiction to...

Sin.

A scientist did an experiment years ago where he made cocaine available to monkeys. They would pull the lever and the feeding tray would give them a hit of cocaine. Soon the monkeys got addicted to the coke. Some would say that these were some very happy monkeys! But then the scientist began to hold the next fix. How many consecutive times do you think the average monkey would pull the lever to get the next fix? 2, 3, 4 times...no way...it was an astonishing 12,800 times. Can you imagine these monkey hitting the lever over and over and over and over and over again? "I've got to have it, I've got to have it, I've got to have it."

In like manner, we are also addicted to sin. We keep coming back to our sin. Sins of body, speech, and mind. Sins of thought, word, and deed. We become fixated on gossip, anger, worry, laziness, excuses, and selfishness. We become fixated on our personal sins that seem to give us great pleasure at the time...until guilt sets in. And we find ourselves exiled, in bondage, and stuck. What are those sins that we think have to hit the lever over and over and over again? What are those sins where we say, "I've got to have it. I've got to have it." Perhaps those sins are related to pride, lust, hatred,

and all the ones mentioned above. And the result? We join Israel in singing our depressing, deadly dirge, “How can we sing the songs of Zion while in a foreign land?”

To such captives, Isaiah sings a different song, “*See, My Servant will act wisely; He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.*” **He had it ALL!** Colossians 2:9 states: “*For in Christ ALL the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form.*” Hebrews 1:3 says: “*The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the EXACT representation of His being.*”

Jesus isn’t an assistant to the Father. He isn’t the vice president of the cosmos, a sort of Joe Biden of the universe. Jesus isn’t a junior partner to the Father. NO! HE IS a full-fledged member of the Godhead, equal with the Father in every way, from eternity past. The Nicene Creed describes Jesus with these words: “Being of one substance with the Father.” The Servant had it all. He had the glory of His Father. He had paradise. He had heaven.

And...This Servant gave it ALL! Isaiah 53 continues with these words: He was despised and rejected by men...he was despised...we esteem him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted...pierced for our transgressions...crushed for our iniquities...He was oppressed, and was afflicted...like a lamb that is led to the slaughter...cut off from the land of the living...stricken for the transgression of my people...made his grave with the wicked...numbered with the transgressors.” That’s why in 52:14 the prophet writes, “*Many were appalled at Him, His appearance was disfigured beyond that of any man.*” The Servant gave it all; every last drop of blood. The Servant gave it all; even His very life.

This Servant, He delivers it all. Isaiah 53:11 states, “*By His knowledge My righteous Servant will justify many.*” The Servant delivers what captives need most—forgiveness. Forgiveness is the heart of Isaiah’s own experience. He writes in 6:6-7, “*Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’*”

Forgiveness is at the heart of our own experience as well. From the altar called Calvary, our God touches us with blood-bought forgiveness. The absolution declares it. The font seals it. The table celebrates it. Paul maintains this in Philippians 4:19 when he writes: “*And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*” All, total, complete, everything, the whole enchilada, the whole ball of wax. He had it. He gave it. He delivers it, because it’s ALL part of the plan.

Isaiah 53:10 states that it was God’s Will. We read: “*Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*”¹ Good Friday isn’t just a moving tragedy that people make movies out of. It wasn’t a stopgap measure. Nor was it the Father’s unexpected knee-jerk response to

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2001). (Is 53:10). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

the world plummeting towards self-destruction. It was entirely, wholly, completely. It was ALL God's Will. The cross was drawn into the original blueprint, written into the first script. It wasn't a rewrite. It was His will since before earthly time began. Golgotha, the place of the skull, is the decisive plan of the Father from before the creation of the world.

So we ask the Lutheran question: "What does this mean?" It means Jesus intentionally planted the tree from which His cross would be carved. It means He voluntarily placed Judas Iscariot into the womb of a woman. It means he deliberately called the twelve men to be His disciples for a specific reason...one would betray Him, one would deny Him, and the others would run away. Only one would be at the foot of the cross. It means He was the One who set in motion the political machinery that sent Pilate to Judea and Herod to Jerusalem, but even before that He set in motion the census, so He was born in Bethlehem, sent to Egypt, called out of Egypt, and went to Nazareth. It means that He was the One that fought with Satan in the Wilderness, taught the people, and made the Pharisees mad. And it means He didn't have to do it, but He did it ALL FOR YOU, FOR ME!

Our depressing, deadly dirge knows only bondage, captivity, and addiction. *"How can we sing the songs of Zion while in a foreign land?"* Or perhaps we, too, might think God has forsaken us and cry out: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" However, this is ALL trumped in Isaiah's song that imparts forgiveness, freedom, and divine mercy. When the words of the Fourth Servant Song enter our ears and strike our hearts, we can't help but respond with the words of one more song not by Isaiah, but by a hymn writer named Isaac Watts: "Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a tribute far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!"

He did it All for you, including giving up His life on the cross for you!! Jesus Christ died for you! In Jesus Name! Amen.