

Palm Sunday,
April 9, 2017

Is 50:4-7

Turning it over: Willingness, Faith and Trust.

The prophet Isaiah does a magnificent job of illustrating the phrase, “Your will, God, not mine.” He begins by demonstrating that he is a messenger for God. He has the gifts of, “a well-trained tongue” and ears opened to God’s word. This is an example of a life of willingness – something easier said than done. Isaiah goes on to describe this willingness as not rebelling and not turning back. In other words, he doesn’t let good intentions remain merely a wish or a desire. He has to act, or as we see later in the reading, not *react*. The practical message is about living the Word, regardless of the immediate or worldly consequences.

Doing the right thing, especially where faith and core values are concerned can arouse in others a surprisingly emotional reaction. People may go out of their way to dissuade someone from following a righteous course if they themselves don’t have the integrity or moral fiber to follow that course. Seeing and understanding someone’s alternative point requires humility. It is easier to argue than to listen. Isaiah’s imagery of beating, plucking, buffets and spitting has troubled me for 50 years. The brutality and humiliation of it always struck me as cruel and thoughtless. But only in later years did I begin to understand the point. Think about what’s being suggested here; a man of God lives his life according to the Word. He shares that word in thought and action. But even if shared with grace, it may make others uneasy. After all, the truth, or at least challenging conventional wisdom can do that. This is where and why people often react violently.

So, how does Isaiah remain steadfast in his commitment to God? The answer is simple. He finds his strength in God. Not for a moment does he claim the ability is his own, rather, he puts his faith in the Lord, knowing that his reward may not be immediately apparent. Isaiah does what he believes he is called to do (turning over his will), knowing that God will care for him. That is the essence of faith, and the basis for that faith is trust. Although Isaiah says he will not be put to shame by worldly standards, he may very well be. It is because God’s world is without shame that he can remain steadfast.

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