**Sermon Transcript for Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 5, 2021**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. You may be seated.

Well, thanks be to God that we can sing a new song to Him with the organ and without, and we'll pray for the organ that it will come back when we need to use it again. All right. So we have the book of Isaiah, and Isaiah is speaking about the day of the Lord, the day that the Lord shall come. And I find the first verse just absolutely mind-blowing. It says that, "We will say in that day, the day when the Lord comes, that I will give thanks to You Lord, for though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away that You might comfort me."

So let's just look at that a little bit. For though You were angry with me. Yes. God is angry with all who sin against His name, and that includes you and me. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. There is no distinction. We are all sinners and God has the right, the just and holy right to be angry at us and with us. For we are rebellious, as He describes the Israelites, stiff-necked people, eager to seek our own will and our own desires. Because we have sinned against God in thought, word and deed, we confessed that just a few minutes earlier at the beginning of the service. And we need to understand that it is truly accurate, that God is angry with sinners. Because God demands holiness, and righteousness, and justice, and we cannot do any of that. Even when we seek to do good, a lot of times, the reason we do it is because we want to prove that we're good.

So again, it's about us. It's about what we are trying to communicate to God and to others that, hey, look at us, we're good people. See, I've done these good things. We're not even doing it for God. And when we do sin, the reason that God is angry with us is because every time that we do sin, we are in essence, removing Him from the throne, and declaring ourselves to be God.

Now I know that sounds pretty radical, but that's the truth. Because God said, here are the ways that you are to live, obey my commandments. Therefore, what God says is holy and righteous and just and when we don't follow them, we are saying, God, You got it wrong. I really want to do this. Or I think this is the way it should be, and therefore I'm going to do it. And I'm saying, my ideas are better than God's ideas. Now you mean that, you probably are not consciously saying those things, but in reality, that is what your actions and your thoughts and your words are doing. They're declaring yourself to be God, and your rules to be right, and God's to be wrong. Now you can imagine God would be rightfully upset about that. And we should expect nothing except the wrath of God.

And yet miraculously, insanely, prodigiously He has given us His Son, who died to forgive our sins. Who died so that the anger, the righteous anger of God might not be placed upon me, but might be placed upon Him. And so, God is now angry at His Son because His Son bears our sin. Now, if that is all that God had done for us, it would be worthy of singing a new song of praise and thanksgiving. That the anger of God has gone towards me, and that I no longer need to be afraid of His wrath. But look at what the verse continues to say, "For though, You were angry with me, Your anger turned away." Why did it turn away? Because You put it upon Christ, but immediately following that, "That You might comfort me." How insane is that? I've just acknowledged that God is rightfully angry with me because I've sinned.

God has chosen to forgive my sin, for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ. And now He wants to comfort me the rebellious child. Comfort me? That's insane. Why would God bother to comfort me? He's already forgiven me. Isn't that enough? It would be, but God is so generous, and so loving, and so abundant in His grace and mercy that not only does He want us to know that we are forgiven of our sins, and we no longer need to be afraid of the anger of God. He also wants us to know that He loves us, that He comforts us, that we can have peace with God, that we can be at rest. That He can come, He wants to comfort us from the chaos that is in this world.

You notice in our prayer and also in James, it talks about how God is not like the world with all the various changes and shadows that are in this world. And we pray that God would be steady. And we thank Him for His steadiness through the many changes of the world. And let's face it, this year, has had quite a few changes and unsteadiness in it. We have seen our world rocked in a way that, at least in my memory, it has not been.

And yet we have comfort. God comforts us, that no matter what chaos is going on out there in the world and no matter what struggle you are dealing with personally, you have Christ, and that should comfort you. That should make you sure, that you are loved and at peace. And just to solidify that and to ensure that we understand that, we have the Gospel of John where John records Jesus declaring that He is going to send the Comforter, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete as it is in the Greek. A Paraclete if you listen to that word, it might sound a little bit like paralegal. And that's not a bad translation that para-, that for, in the place of. So the Paraclete, the Helper, the Comforter is the one who comes to stand before us and God, and help us. On the one hand to speak to God and say, God, I know You are angry at sin, however, You said through Your word that Your Son took care of the sin. So therefore don't show Your people Your wrath; show them Your comfort and Your love.

So He advocates to the father, and declares what the father has said to be true. Then He communicates to us and reminds us, yes, even though you are sinners, you can come before God, and you can thank Him, and you can be comforted, and you can be at peace because God has done it all for you. That is the role of the Comforter. That is the role of the Holy Spirit to remind us and God of what Jesus Christ has done on the cross for us. And so Jesus promises, now again, He is speaking these words, not after He died on the cross, but He is speaking these words on the night that He was betrayed. He is declaring to them before He goes. And when He says, I'm going away from you, where you cannot follow me, it's not just, I'm going to ascend into Heaven, although that's in view, He's saying this before He dies on the cross.

He is going to a place where the disciples cannot follow. He is going to the cross. He's going to the very place where we look to, for comfort. That ugly disfigured figure of Jesus Christ on the cross gives us comfort. And that is where He went so that we might know through the power of the Holy Spirit, that we are at peace with God. And that should fill us with comfort. So what an amazing God that we have, who not only turns away His wrath, but also comforts us with His presence. And because we are comforted with His presence, we should be the kind of first fruits of His creatures as James says. And how are we to act as first fruits?

How are we to act like the first fruits of God? Well, another part of the scripture talks about the fruit of the Spirit. So the Son leaves us, dies on the cross, ascends into Heaven so that He can send the Spirit, so that the Spirit can fill us with His presence so that we can receive the fruit of the Spirit, so that we can then be the first fruits to the world around us. So how do we do that? Kindness, peace, gentleness, self-control, faithfulness; all of those things that are the fruit of the Spirit. That is why He immediately follows, know this my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. Because if you are filled with the fruit of the Spirit: kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control, there's not a lot of room for anger.

How many times in our lives have we been in a situation where we've said something and immediately after we've said it, we think, oh, can I take that back? Did I really say that out loud? I'm sure that's never happened to any of you. You've never said anything that you're, oh, those words really come out of my mouth. And why, because we spoke in haste, we spoke in anger, we spoke in frustration, or we spoke in fear. Because we weren't living in the comfort that God provides. We weren't living in the confidence that God will take care of the situation that is around us. That ever changing situation of this world, causes many of us I'm sure to be angry. I mean, we have a world that is actively seeming to attack us. We have a world that is declaring good to be evil and evil to be good.

And it can rightly cause us to be frustrated. And that's not a bad thing necessarily, but how we respond, that is the key. We are called not to demonstrate our frustration with righteous indignation and anger that doesn't do anybody any good. We are called to be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. Why? Because we are comforted by God. And because He loves us, we therefore are called to love one another. And perfect love casts out all fear, and anger, and strife, and worry and doubt.

God loves us. We are comforted by that fact. Therefore, we don't need to bring up the anger of man, because it does not produce the righteousness God requires. Because in our anger, we inevitably act or say that which is against the peace of God, that which is against the love of God. We're still called to declare sin, sin. We're still called to say, this is what God's word says, and therefore what is going on is wrong. But we're to say it in love, and we're to respond to each other in love. They will know we are Christians by our righteous indignation.

No, they will know we are Christians by our love. Our love for each other, our love for God and our love for everybody else out there, including those people that just irritate us to no end, to love them as well. Because remember the anger of God has been turned away, and not only has it been turned away and not only does God promise to comfort us, but the way He says that His anger has been turned away so that He might comfort us. In other words, His desire is, what He wants to do is comfort us. But in order to do that, His anger has to be turned away. So He had to figure out a way to deal with His anger so that He might do what He really wants to do, comfort us and love us. That was His motivation, that He loves us, that He wants to comfort us.

So therefore God is our salvation. We will trust and we will not be afraid, for the Lord is my strength and my song. When the Lord is Your strength, what do you do? You sing out in praise and joy; Alleluia! He is risen. He is risen indeed! This is the hope of our salvation. This is the joy of our hearts and we cannot help but burst forth into song and to sing a new song unto the Lord for He has done marvelous things. He has turned away His wrath, so that He might comfort you and me. May His grace and His mercy and His love and His comfort be and abide with you always, now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.