

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Good Friday – April 18, 2025

*"Surely [the Lord] has borne our grief's and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

*⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our
iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed."*

- Isaiah 53:4-5 -

When I was studying music in college, one of the first solos I ever sang was the African-American spiritual "There is a Balm in Gilead." The words answer the prophet Jeremiah's question, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?" (Jer. 8:22). The song starts off, "There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul." Gilead is the name of a mountainous region, east of the Jordan River. It was a place of refuge for Israelites fleeing west. So, you could say, it was a "balm" (ointment; salve) in the metaphorical sense because it provided a place of healing.

There is a balm in Gilead as there is a source of healing and comfort in Jesus Christ. As the prophet Isaiah says, "With [Jesus'] wounds we are healed" (Is. 53:5). On this Good Friday, we recall the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. And it is because of this sacrifice that we are healed. Healed of what? We are healed of sin and death.

Jesus' body was crushed on the Friday in Calvary. He was flogged and whipped countless times. His bloodied, beat-up body was nailed to a Roman cross and raised up for all to see his tortured, naked body. **He was pierced for our transgressions.** Jesus was pierced in the side of his chest to ensure he was dead. And once the Roman soldiers were satisfied, the earth grew dark and shook. The curtain was torn from top to bottom as heaven agonized over Jesus' death.

Jesus' body was taken down from the criminal's cross. It was laid to rest in a borrowed tomb. And there it would remain until Sunday morning.

Jesus' blood was shed and poured out so that we might be healed of our sin-sick souls, so that we might finally be in God's good graces, not by anything we've done, but only by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, made for us on the cross. By his wounds and bloodied body, we are healed. We are spared eternal death and separation from God. Because Christ was crushed for our iniquities, we now have the promise of eternal life with him in his kingdom. Our balm is in Jesus Christ. **He** makes the wounded whole. **He** heals the sin-sick soul.