

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

March 23, 2014

All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray

Isaiah 53:6

Prayer: *Father God, we do thank you for your grace, I thank you for your church, I just thank you for the little ones all the way up to the old folks, Lord, what an incredible blessing, what an incredible group of people that you have brought together this morning. Father, we just again, we have the privilege of gathering together to offer up corporate worship and we have the privilege as well of opening up your book and learning anew and in an even deeper level what it is you have done for us on the cross. And so Father today, again as we are back in the servant songs, we pray that you would give us grace, strength, and the unction of your Holy Spirit so that we might be able to not just see and understand what's in your word but that it would change and affect our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Isaiah 53:6-7 says this, it says: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the

slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. As you all know, we are looking at the servant songs of Isaiah and as I said the last time, these songs are poems and as such they have certain rhythms not just structurally but also in terms of their focus. And we've seen the focus shift back and forth from the servant himself who is the Lord Jesus Christ to those whom the Lord was serving, who is us, and the prophet Isaiah who wrote these songs some 800 years before Jesus was even born, puts the spotlight on Jesus and just what it is he went through for us. And so he's back and forth with an inward look and then an outward look. In *Isaiah 53:5* we saw the inward look. It says: *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by his stripes we are healed.* And in the very next verse we see this outward look looking at us, in *Isaiah 53:6-7*: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Well, this morning we find the spotlight is going to be turned back inward towards Christ. Our text this morning is *Isaiah 53:7*: *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.* Now just to start off, the Hebrew word for "oppressed" here is a word that is used

that means to drive an animal. How appropriate a word like that to describe a lamb being driven to the slaughter. It says: *He was oppressed and he was afflicted.* Now the other word in that sentence we saw a few weeks back and it's the word "afflicted," it means to depress, to press down, to abase. You see, in the Old Testament when the high priest was about to offer a sacrifice for sin, he would place his hands over the animal and he would do that to quantify and to objectify the sin that he would then place on the animal, and in a sense the animal was afflicted with the sins of the people that it was about to die for. It was a picture of how sin would be pressed down onto Jesus, how he would appear before his Father afflicted with our sin.

Verse 7 says: *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.* Okay. But isn't it true that Jesus did indeed open his mouth? I mean, how can we have all of these different Easter services entitled "The Last Seven Words of Jesus" if Jesus said no words? You see, right here those who pour over the scriptures looking for contradictions, here's where they pounce because they say A-ha, you say Jesus never spoke. Jesus spoke. Well, the point is Jesus was not absolutely silent when he went to the cross. The point Isaiah was making is that he said no words in his own defense. The word "yet" connects these two thoughts. In verse 7: *He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his*

mouth. What Isaiah is saying here is that in spite of his oppression, in spite of his affliction, in spite of the unfairness of this kangaroo court he was in that was operating illegally, in spite of Jesus being driven like an animal and placed under the guilt of us all, Jesus was not willing to defend himself. He would not open his mouth in his defense.

Now, there are two very different sets of reasons why Jesus opened not his mouth, and the first reason is physical. *Hebrews 2:17* says: *Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.* Now we know the high priest was in charge of orchestrating this sacrifice whenever it took place, and he sacrificed the lamb for sin but in this case Jesus was in charge of orchestrating the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who was there to take away the sins of the world. All of the hundreds of thousands of lambs that had been sacrificed in the Old Testament served only to point to the one true Lamb of God who was born to live this perfect life and then offer that life up -- quote -- "As a lamb led to the slaughter." The altar that the lamb was on was a cross, and the high priest who was orchestrating the sacrifice was none other than the one who was being sacrificed.

So why should Jesus open his mouth? Why should Jesus offer a defense that could delay or even alter the outcome when it is he who is orchestrating this sacrifice in the first place? What good will it accomplish Jesus to protest his innocence when the goal is certainly not his freedom, the goal is his sacrifice. Now, Oscar Pistorius is the famous Olympic athlete on trial in Australia for murdering his girlfriend. Now he desperately wants to influence the outcome of his trial and so he's hired the very best and most expensive defense lawyers he can find. And they've established all kinds of elaborate scenarios in which there's this possibility that a jury might just let him off. And so his team is speaking out as loudly and as persuasively as it can. Well, Jesus' desire was the exact opposite. On four separate occasions during his passion, Jesus refused to contribute a single word to his defense and so his was the silence of the lamb. The first event happened right after Jesus' arrest. It was in the courtyard of the high priest, Jesus is undergoing this withering barrage of accusations. In *Mark 14:6*, he says this: *And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."* Well, Jesus obviously opens his mouth. He's obviously

speaking. He references Daniel's vision of the coming of the savior spoken of in Daniel 7, but he says the worst possible thing you could ever say if you're looking to be released. I mean now his captors know without a doubt he's claiming to be the Messiah. And so the results of his words are predictable. Verse 63 it says: *And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him and to cover his face and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards received him with blows.* So Jesus said what he said on the physical level because he had no desire to change the outcome of this trial. In fact it was for this very cup that he had come. *He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.*

So he was led as a lamb to the slaughter. What can I say about a phrase that has entered our lexicon, it's become so much of a cliché that the dictionary now defines "as a lamb led to the slaughter" as meaning innocently, helplessly, without realizing the danger. You see, going like a lamb to the slaughter implies a certain level of ignorance. Today it applies to anything from the sublime to the ridiculous. The Denver Broncos went to the Superbowl like lambs to the slaughter. The members of flight 370

flying from Malaysia to Beijing boarded that plane having no idea they were going like lambs to the slaughter. But that's not at all the way that Jesus went to the cross. You see, in Jesus' case "like a lamb to the slaughter" meant that he went meekly and humbly and without protest. A sense that he went innocently and ignorantly and naively could not be more wrong. He knew precisely where he was going and he knew exactly what was going to take place. And we know that by virtue of the many times he reminded his disciples exactly what was going to happen. In *John 14:29* Jesus says: *And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.* In *Matthew 20:18*, he says: *"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."* Jesus knew exactly what he was getting into including even the hideous details. And this silence is compared by Isaiah to being shorn as a sheep of its wool. He says then: *As a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth.* We know a sheep that is shorn of his wool is stripped of its protection, it's stripped of its comfort, it's stripped of its dignity, and Jesus was shorn of all three. We know Jesus' protection was at least twelve legions of angels. We know that because after Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant in the garden, Jesus

said this in *Matthew 26*, he said: "Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" I've mentioned this many times before, twelve legions is about 72,000 angels.

Listen to how Charles Spurgeon put this. He said this of Jesus. He said: He had only to have lifted His eyes to Heaven, or to have felt a wrathful wish and legions of angels would have chased out the ribald soldiers -- one flash of a seraph's wing and Herod had been eaten by worms. The hill of the cross might have become a volcano's mouth to swallow up the whole multitude who stood there jesting and jeering at Him. But no, nothing of the kind -- there was no display of power, or rather there was so great a display of power over Himself that He did not use His might against His most bitter foes! He restrained Omnipotence, itself, with a strength which can never be measured, for His mighty love availed even to restrain Divine Wrath! He kept back the natural indignation which must have come over His spirit against the injustice, the lies, the shameful malice of His foes. He held it all back and was patient, meek, silent to the end.

We know that Jesus voluntarily gave up his protection because as

high priest, he knew this very time was the time he had come into the world. He gave up his comfort the moment that he found himself squalling in a feeding trough in a barn some 33 years earlier. This was the king of the universe, creator of trillions of galaxies, entitled to the most opulent splendor this world could ever produce and yet as Paul says in *2 Corinthians 8:9*: *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.* And so having given up his protection and his comfort, he then gave up his dignity. And that again on a physical level; that is, he submitted to being slapped and punched and spit on, treated like the worst of common criminals. But you know, any non biased observer looking on this kind of legal fiasco would have seen the accusers, the liars, and the conspirators all shouting each other down in an effort to make a case that could not be made. And there in the midst of all this cacophony was the absolute sense of dignity standing there serenely silent.

Well, the second time we are witness to the silence of the lamb occurred early the next morning. The Sanhedrin is determined to have Jesus executed, but it simply knows it lacks the authority to do that. And so they bind Jesus up and they deliver him to Pilate hoping to find the authority there to execute him. *Mark 15* says this: *And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a*

consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole Council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed. See, once again Jesus is here, he's willing to speak if only to affirm the truth of one of many of Pilate's questions. "Are you the king of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." Again a statement no one would make if they're looking to escape the charges that Jesus is now under. But as soon as the question swing over to accusations, Jesus once again becomes silent. Verse 4: Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Well, what happens next, this requires a little bit of background. This has to do more with the relationship between Pilate and Herod. You see, Pilate was the procurator of Jerusalem; Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee. To kind of put that in modern political terms, Pilate was Mayor de Blasio and Herod was Governor Cuomo, except both of these in this case had the power of life and death. And so Pilate wants nothing whatsoever to do with Jesus, but he

also wants to avoid any trouble with the Jews because he's been in political trouble numerous times before and he hates that this problem has been dumped in his lap, because it's obvious to him he's dealing with an innocent man. Luke 23:4 says this: *Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place." When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.*

That word "Galilee," that was music to Pilate's ears. You see, it was his chance to offload this problem onto somebody else, and it became the third opportunity to observe again the silence of the Lamb. This is verse 8, it says: *When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.*

Jesus had already been treated with absolute contempt both by the Sanhedrin and now by Herod's soldiers, and throughout it all, he refused to offer up a single word in his defense. But now it's about to get much worse. *John 19:1* says this: *Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!" When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" And Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin." So Jesus now thoroughly beaten, thoroughly flogged once*

again goes back to silence. He breaks his silence though to Pilate one last time but it's important to understand the reason why. He breaks his silence because his Father's authority is being questioned, his Father's glory's being questioned. And so Jesus who spoke truth only again speaks up to tell Pilate where his authority comes from. Again: *Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."*

So Jesus spoke. And again, Jesus made seven more statements after that statement, we all know, we've heard the seven last statements of Jesus. He's made these statements from *Luke 23:34* which says: *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."* all the way forward to *Luke 23:46* at the very end when Jesus says, *calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit!"* And having said this he breathed his last. So Jesus spoke many words. But not a single word that he said was uttered as a defense or an attempt to excuse or evade his fate. And so all of his words line up exactly with what Isaiah said in the servant song: *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.*

Now, I said at the beginning of this message that there were two reasons for Jesus' silence, and so far we've only looked at the one, the physical, that is that Jesus was orchestrating his own sacrifice, that he had no desire whatsoever to contribute to its delay or to its avoidance. And so it's time now to look at the other reason for Jesus' silence and it's metaphysical. See, the second reason why Jesus was silent was because Jesus was guilty. 2 *Corinthians 5:21* says this: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* You see, Jesus had no answer for his accusers because at the time he was in the process of becoming sin, every single sin that anyone could ever accuse him of. And when the high priest set their railing accusations against him, he was silent because he was guilty of sins against the kingdom of heaven itself. And when Pilate and Herod both accused him, he was silent because he was guilty of sins against the kingdom of earth as well. And when the Jews themselves accused him, he was silent because he was guilty of sins against his fellow man. In fact there was no sin, no failure, and no grievance that would ever be laid against him that Jesus wouldn't be guilty of. Moses committed murder by killing an Egyptian soldier. Jesus went to the cross bearing Moses' guilt for that murder. But it wasn't just that murder that Jesus was guilty of, it is every murder committed by every one of his sheep for from Moses' murder to the taking of the life of 53 million unborn babies

in America. And it wasn't just for the taking of a life that Jesus stood guilty of murder. Listen to what Jesus himself said in *Matthew 5:21*, he said: "You have heard it said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'" But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire." You see, Jesus stood guilty before his Father for every single insult you and I have ever leveled against another. David was an adulterer. David committed adultery with Bathsheba. Jesus stood before God guilty of David's adultery. He was also guilty of the adultery you might have committed this week, if not with a flesh and blood person then perhaps with some digital image that was downloaded through some porn site. Jesus stood before his Father guilty of that as well. Jacob was a deceiver and a liar. He stole his brother's birthright by deceit. Peter was a different kind of liar, Peter was a panicked liar who in a moment of cowardice told a servant girl who had asked him if he knew Jesus, that he never even knew the man. Jesus was guilty not only of Jacob's lie committed hundreds of years in the past but he was also guilty of the lie that Peter had not even told yet. Jesus was also guilty of the lie you might have spoken this past week. He's guilty of all the white lies that we all tell just to save face. In fact, Jesus was guilty of breaking

all ten of the ten commandments because ever last sin of every last one of his sheep was objectified, quantified, and then placed onto his perfect head. For six earth hours or more he hung on the cross bearing the collective wrath of the eternal price of that sin from a holy God who happened to be his Father. And as I said before, it was a guilt that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all combined to address at the cross. You see, the Son delighted in doing the Father's will. He said in *John 17:4*: "*I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.*" And we know the Father willingly gave his son so that he might be the just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. And that the Holy Spirit empowered the Son to accomplish this propitiation as he *through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God*. You see, the agony of the cross and the willingness to bear that agony was borne by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit alike.

Jesus had two reasons for remaining silent. The physical reason was that he was our great high priest orchestrating his own sacrifice and he wanted nothing to stand in the way of that process. The metaphysical reason for Jesus' silence, the reason why he had nothing to say to his accusers is because he was guilty. *He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep*

before his shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.

Listen to what John Calvin wrote. He said: For although He was without spot or blemish, He bore all our sins upon Himself. We need not be astonished, then, that He stood there as if He had been convicted. For otherwise He could not have performed the office of mediator except by accepting the sentence and confessing that in our persons He had deserved to be condemned. That, then, is what the silence of our Lord Jesus Christ implies, in order that today we can call upon God with a full voice, and that we can ask Him for pardon for all vices and offenses.

You see, we can call on God with a full voice because Jesus held his voice. And the reason why he held his voice is because he was assuming our guilt. *Romans 3:19* says this: *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.* You see, the lies and the murders and the adulteries and all the other sins that will one day before the throne of God stop each and every one of our mouths stopped his mouth 2,000 years ago. And because he stopped his mouth, when the day comes that we all stand guilty and silent before the bench of God's law, because he stopped his mouth, we can all cry out with a full voice: "Nothing to thy throne I bring, simply to thy cross I

cling."

Like I said, Jesus had two different responses, two different reasons for his silence. The one physical: As high priest he was compelled to drink the cup that the Father had given him and his silence was there to ensure that. The one metaphysical, again: That he was on our behalf guilty. But you know we, too, will have two different responses and causes for our silence when we are accused. And again, like Jesus we will have two different responses, a metaphysical one and a physical one. The metaphysical cause for our silence is that we no longer need to speak out to defend ourselves because we now have an advocate. That word "advocate" is a very interesting word when it comes to speaking. If you look at the word, you might notice right in the middle of that word advocate is almost the whole word "vocal." You see, to advocate is to speak for someone else. *1 John 2:1* says: *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. See, our sins which are many have been paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross. He's not only our sacrifice, he is our sacrificer, and he is our advocate. It is he who speaks up for us in the court of the enemy who accuses us, in the court of justice which demands a payment which Jesus has already supplied, and in the court of heaven itself where Jesus*

Christ the righteous is speaking out on our behalf. So metaphysically we have no need to speak up on our defense because the best spokesperson the universe has ever known has not only assumed our guilt but he is also speaking on our behalf. But there are two different ways to receive this. One is blessed and one, frankly, is cursed. We can either look on Jesus as our Lord and our Savior who died in our place or we can look on Jesus as our cosmic butler, someone who's left us a blank check and a get out of hell free card so that we might sin just as we like and then call on him to clean it all up. And after all, both of those parties can sing: "Jesus paid it all; all to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain, he washed it white as snow." You can sing that song as someone eternally grateful for God's own sacrifice or you can sing it like some spiritual trust fund brat who believes he's inherited a blank check for sins he no longer needs to deal with, thinking all the while the very same song, "Hey, Jesus paid it all." See that's who Paul was thinking of when he said this in *Romans 6:1*, he said this: *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?*

So how do I know which is which? How do I know which recipient I am? I mean the one who's eternally grateful for Jesus silently bearing my sin or the one who's the eternal trust fund brat who

thinks of Jesus as his cosmic escape hatch? You see, this difference is a difference between those who are truly saved and those who are not, so knowing that difference is absolutely critical. Here's how you can tell the difference. Those who are truly God's own have God's Holy Spirit living inside them. God's spirit is always grieved by our sins; hence, we too are grieved as well. *Romans 8:8* says this: *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* So the test becomes this: If my sin doesn't grieve me at all, if it doesn't take you back to the guilt that Jesus bore, to the silence of that Lamb, then perhaps you need to wonder, is God's spirit truly within me? So we ask ourselves, have I ever fully committed myself to Christ? Does the sin that grieved him grieve me? Am I truly his? The good news is that Christ loved us even if we are trust fund brats, and if we are, he still calls out to us to repent, to receive his gift of everlasting life.

So metaphysically we can be silent knowing that Christ speaks for us but physically, physically we also have another call. It's a call to a different type of silence. It's in *1 Peter 2:21*. He says this, he says: *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you*

might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. Now Peter's saying Jesus' silence is an example for us. When the high priest reviled, when the Sanhedrin reviled, when Herod and Pilate reviled, and finally when the crowd itself reviled, he did not revile in return. Spurgeon said: Christ could have turned Golgotha's hill into the mouth of a living volcano sucking his enemies right down into hell itself but he didn't. When he suffered, he did not threaten. You know, the most they could get out of Jesus was the statement he made as he was being crucified: Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

See, there's a reason why Jesus was -- quote -- "leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps." It's the reason why Peter says Jesus had no need to revile or to threaten or to even speak out. It's because Jesus -- quote -- "continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly." That's the secret. Could it be that we so quickly forget that the one who offered up his only Son as a substitute and sacrifice in payment for each of us loves us beyond our ability to measure. Romans 8:32 says: He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall

bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. So the Spirit is saying here, says look, look at the Lord Jesus Christ. He was able to remain silent because he knew that the wisest, the strongest, and most powerful voice in the entire universe had his back. And even though he knew that for a time even his Father had to forsake him and that he would be all alone, yet he still trusted because he knew his Father was trustworthy. He said in Psalm 22: In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

So our practical takeaway from all of this, it's an understanding. It's an understanding that Jesus' silence was a function of Jesus' trust in his Father. And though Jesus had to be forsaken for our sin, he promises that will never happen to us. And he asks us to trust in a very practical way. When your boss, or your co-worker, or your friends, and especially your enemies revile you, follow the example of Jesus, follow the silence of the Lamb. You know, if you need to explain something or to enlighten someone or to give some information that might explain something, by all means do so. That's just what Jesus did when Pilate started bragging about his own authority. But when it comes to giving an equal measure of what it is we've been given, God once again directs us to his Son and to the cross and he says realize who I am, realize what I've

done, realize how much I've already proven that I love you, and trust me with your silence. Listen to what God says in *Romans 12:19*, he says: *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. You see, Jesus' silence was a far more powerful weapon than all of the screaming, shouting, and reviling his enemies used. It is a silence that God asks us to trust and to copy and to emulate because it is trust that produced the silence of the Lamb. Jesus -- quote -- "*continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*" And he asks us to do the same. It's nothing but a realization that the wisest, the strongest, the most powerful voice in the universe has got our back as well. *He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not his mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.* Let's pray.

Father, we just thank you, we thank you for your silence. Father, we thank you for your silence, recognizing that yourself as the high priest would not do anything to stand in the way of this process going forward, this process for which you came. Father, we also thank you for your silence because you assumed our guilt. I

thank you for silently accepting it and silently taking it. And Father on our end, I thank you for the metaphysical reason why we can be silent because we know now we have an advocate who is speaking for us in heaven itself. And on the physical level, Father, I pray that we would have enough trust in you to realize if you've given us your only begotten Son would you not give us all things including the ability to defend ourselves, give us the ability to be silent, to emulate you as well when our enemies revile us, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.