

# Jesus' Argument

**THE 17<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST** [Proper 19b] September 16, 2018

## **Isaiah 50:4-10**

<sup>4</sup> The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.

Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

<sup>5</sup> The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious;

I turned not backward.

<sup>6</sup> I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;

I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

<sup>7</sup> But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced;

therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

<sup>8</sup> **He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me?**

**Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.**

<sup>9</sup> **Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty?**

Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

<sup>10</sup> Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant?

Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

## **In the Name of Jesus.**

There is he who argues for you; there is he who argues against you. It's guilt or innocence for you, shame or honor, death or life. Making this discernment of who argues for us and who argues against us lets us diagnose the travail in our consciences.

He who argues against you, your adversary, the one who wants to bind you in guilt, stain you in shame, is Satan. Satan and the other fallen angels under him. The Hebrew name *Satan*, we know, means “the accuser.” The one using God’s Law not to show God’s creation of the universe, and not to reveal God’s good and kind will for how people are given to care for one another, but uses God Law, always, to accuse.

He accuses you before the Throne in Heaven, arguing against you that you are unrighteous, that you have no real faith, that you care not for your neighbor, that you think chiefly of yourself, and he makes this argument by lining you up in contrast to the holy Law.

This is the indictment Satan argues before God in Heaven. And his argument holds weight. For you and I are in our sinful flesh, we really do think chiefly of ourselves, and when lined up against the holy Law, we really do have no hope.

At the same time, Satan’s fallen angels afflict us here in our lives on Earth. The argument made against you in Heaven, that same argument is brought to you in your own conscience. If Satan uses God’s Law to argue to God in Heaven that you are unrighteous, the unclean spirits use that same Law to hit you in your conscience, giving you a troubled conscience when you try to fall to sleep. If the charge is that you have no real faith, that you are stingy and care for yourself, the demons will sting you with this charge in your conscience.

There is he who argues against you. It is Satan. And it is the fallen angels under him. And as long as you and I live in our sinful flesh—that is, until we die and are with our Lord, or until the Lord comes again to judge the living and the dead, whichever comes first—as long as we live in our sinful flesh, we will be sinners according to our life of the flesh, and we will be afflicted by the accusing angel, Satan, and we will have consciences troubled by the accusation of God’s holy Law.

At the same time, there is he who argues for us. He who argues for you, your advocate, the One who releases you from guilt, who covers you with honor, is Jesus, God the Son who took on human flesh in order to be your substitute and advocate.

In becoming your substitute, and the substitute to stand in for every sinner, he gave his back to those who strike and he did not hide his face from disgrace and spitting. [Isaiah 50:6]

He willingly gave himself over to humiliation and crucifixion in order to shed the blood to redeem every sinner. The prophets were sent to proclaim him. Isaiah 50:9:

**But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced;**

**therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.**

**He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me?**

**Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.**

**Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty?**

These are the words of Jesus, as he willingly gave himself over to the humiliation and death of the cross. Yet, before his Father he was vindicated, honored, and exalted.

Now, having shed the blood to atone for all sinners, Jesus has taken his place next to his Father at the heavenly Throne. And there, he argues for you.

To the accusation that you are unrighteous, his legal argument is that, *Yes, that is true, Father, but I, your Son am righteous and have clothed this one in my own righteousness.*

To the accusation that you have no real faith, he is able to argue, *Yes, but I am faithful and trustworthy, always good to my promise, and I have given this one my Name and promise in Baptism.*

To the accusation that you are stingy, thinking chiefly of yourself, he is able to argue, *Yes, Father, but I am generous and abundant in my gifts, I love those you have given me even more than I love my own life, and this one is forgiven, is washed clean by my blood, and this one belongs to my grace.*

This is the advocacy of Jesus in Heaven. And his argument wins the day. For you and I, even as we live in our sinful flesh, which is at all times under the accusation of God's holy Law, we are also given our life of repentance and faith. And in this life of repentance and faith, we look only to the righteousness of our Lord Jesus, to his grace and his gifts, so that in our life of faith, we are clean before God our Father in Heaven.

At the same time, here in our daily lives on Earth, while Jesus is our advocate in Heaven vindicating us before his Father, he delivers that argument down to us, so we can hear the words and be justified.

If Jesus is interceding to his Father on your behalf, justifying you in Heaven, he sends forth the Holy Spirit to bring that Word of your justification to you in his Gospel, so that you, hearing his Gospel, will know the forgiveness of your sins, will be covered in his honor, and will be at peace in your conscience.

Even while you and I live in our sinful flesh—that is, until we die and are with our Lord, or until he comes again to judge the living and the dead, whichever comes first—even while we live in sinful flesh, he is faithful and trustworthy, gracious and generous, bringing to us all the gifts of his cross, and daily raising us up in our life of repentance and faith, to live in the joy of the Gospel and the true hope of life everlasting.

And in this life of faith, this daily life we are given of hearing his Gospel, this earthly life of ours where he sustains us with his Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the cleansing of our consciences, in this life, he sets us as his servants to speak his Words here on Earth. The same words he speaks in Heaven about the sinner—that the sinner is justified and clean—he puts on our tongues here on Earth, so that our neighbor may hear this comfort, too.

### ***The tongue,***

James tells us,

***is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by Hell ... no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.***

[James 3:9]

That's the tongue of our sinful flesh. A tongue ready always to set a fire, to accuse, to poison and curse.

But our Lord gives us a new tongue. The tongue of our life of faith. A tongue speaking the language not to cover in shame, but to build-up and encourage, not to accuse and curse, but to bless and give honor.

*And all this because, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the atonement for our sins, and not for our sins only but also for the sins of the whole world. [1 John 2:2]*

**In the Name of Jesus.**