Isaiah 53:7-9, Mark 15:1-5

“Say Something”

 This week I was introduced to Kony2012 also known as STOPKONY. One of our youth in the confirmation class let me know about it. If you haven’t heard about it then it probably means that you haven’t been on the internet this past week. It is a cause that has gone viral to stop a man who singlehandedly is responsible for turning thousands of young boys into soldiers and girls into slaves. It is a cause that has made a tremendous impact speaking out on behalf of the voiceless, those children in sub-Saharan African that cannot raise their own voices. Very powerful.

 It is a great example of righteous indignation against an injustice finding a voice and, well, saying something and making a difference. But today, we hear another voice, actually we don’t hear it at all, we see ourselves faced with the greatest injustice possible: innocence stripped away and sent to be executed. There is no greater injustice than innocence being robbed of its voice and accused, tried, found guilty, and judgment being carried out to death.

 This time of year, lent that is, one of the books of the Bible that is read often is Isaiah. And it is in Isaiah specifically where we find ourselves reading along in chapters 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-11, and then 52:13-53:12 that depict a suffering servant. This is one who was abused, by his stripes we are healed. But throughout these servant examples that are supposed to represent Jesus and his life here on earth we read:

 42:2 – He will not cry or lift up his voice

 50:6 – I gave my back to them who struck me, gave my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard, I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

 And today in 53:7 he did not open his mouth, he did not open his mouth. Twice we find that stated. So what is it going to be? Are we called to speak out in the face of injustice and to be on the side of oppressed people? But how do we do that if we follow Jesus’ example here in Isaiah?

 Maybe Mark can help us, but I think you will find as we open the Gospel reading as we walk in his footsteps again today, that Jesus doesn’t say a mumbling word. Let’s read.

 **READ**

You need to know that I grew up in a household where we were taught at a very young age that as Christians it is absolutely our responsibility to raise our voice in protest where we see inequities and injustices. If you see something wrong in the world, you fix it and we were raised actually believing that individuals are capable of making tremendous differences. I still cling tenaciously to this belief, especially as a Christian and a follower in Jesus Christ who is arguably the most influential individual in history. Even if you don’t believe in the whole God thing, if nothing else it would be hard to argue the impact this individual has had by raising his voice in teaching and reaching out his hand in healing.

 So, today’s Scripture has made me very uneasy all week. I even skipped men’s breakfast afraid that my long standing notion of civil disobedience and speaking out in the face of injustice would be challenged. Actually, I just slept in to be honest. But as we look at the Gospel and at Isaiah who describes our Savior in a very prophetic way, we have to ask the question: Are we to do as Jesus is described as doing in these verses, or not? Are Jesus’ actions of submission here an example for us to follow today, or are they actually very powerful actions that free us to a life of Christian living on all different levels?

 When we were in Israel we went to the place where it was thought they held Jesus while the council met as we read in vs. 1. It was a palace that had a room with a shackle that seemed a bit out of place in an otherwise fairly elegant palace. We read this Scripture in that room and then we went out to a patio that is thought where Jesus was taken when he had an encounter with Pilate. We read that Scripture again and I wanted to shout out as we were reading it, say something Jesus!

 Especially when he was faced with Pilate. Pilate that we read about this encounter in the other Scriptures. He was probably the most reluctant villain we find. In another Gospel we find his wife telling him not to have anything to do with this Jesus guy. Probably if Jesus were just to say something, maybe even anything somewhat convincing Pilate would have caved and given in. Pilate asks him, are you the king of the Jews. Because if he is, then maybe he was on the side of the poor and the oppressed and he would make that known. Maybe he was the one that people were relying on to take them to a different place. You know the Jews were an oppressed people themselves. That’s why Isaiah was so popular. They knew they were the oppressed, but a Messiah, a King would come to liberate them.

 Are you the King of the Jews. If you say so. What? Really, if you say so? That sounds like a Pee Wee Herman response: I know you are, but what am I? We find a similar setting when Jesus is hanging on the cross and they mock him and tell him to free himself and to get himself down off the cross by himself, after all, if you are the King of the Jews you should be able to do that. But he doesn’t, why not? Why doesn’t he do anything or say something to defend himself, to reveal himself in what could have been the most amazing opportunity for him to reveal his complete self.

 Isaiah tell us why not. He had to be led to the slaughter, so that the iniquities of us all could be upon his shoulder. Do you understand what I mean when I say that? This is what lent is all about. Not just lifting up his suffering and his death, but the reason for his suffering and his death. When Jesus was wounded for us, as an innocent person, he took on your individual sin. Each time he was beaten, it was our sin on his back. On the cross he was lifted up for us individually and when he died, as this Scripture states would inevitably happen and would have to happen in order for his sacrifice to have an effect for us, our sin, our impurities, our injustices were taken with him.

 Jesus could have said something and in a Martin Scorzese type of way taken himself down from off the cross, avoided all the pain and suffering, but he didn’t. He chose not to because of you and Ray, and you Clayton, you. Now I’m not going to have any of you get up and interrupt me this time. But this sermon is personally for each one of us individually. Your sin was placed on him. St. Augustine said that if you were the only living person on the face of this planet, Jesus would have still died for you. He didn’t say a Word for your sake.

 In the news lately we heard about a woman who made a tremendous sacrifice. Did you head about the woman who was in the middle of the tornadoes and she covered her kids with blankets and her physical body not through one but two tornadoes. Her house literally fell around her and a metal beam cut off her legs, but she stayed covering her kids. They walked out of that house unscathed, and she is alive grateful that her kids are safe. This type of sacrifice we may each of us say that we would do for our kids, or for people that we know and that we love.

 Jesus, of course, we hear in Scripture, did it for us even while we were yet sinners. At the Bible study on Wednesday I mentioned to the group to close your eyes and think of a sin that you have committed or that you are committing. In that moment God knew that sin and in that moment he still chose to die for us, in spite of our sin.

 But where does that leave us in regards to giving our voice to the oppressed or speaking out ourselves in those situations where it just seems that Christians ought to be speaking out? The Bible tells us that Jesus’ sacrifice was once and for all for each of us individually. His sacrifice led to our salvation and also led to our understanding that we are not called to sacrifice others by doing nothing on their behalf.

 We are called to ensure that the sacrifice of our Savior be not squandered away by our being silent while others suffer knowing that in many cases our voices could make a difference. We are called to say something, to do something, because our Savior was silent in order to wash us clean.

 There was a fire in Washington State some years back in one of their national forests. A ranger was walking along a path surveying the damage when he saw a quail in the middle of the path that has taken the brunt of the fire and was completely charred and dead lying with its wings out. Saddened the ranger flicked the quail off the path with his stick and out from under the wings of the dead mother quail scurrying away were two chicks who hadn’t been touched and were completely protected by her wings.

 We have been protected by the wings of our Savior, washed clean, and so now it is time to scurry about in action as a result of the sacrifice of our Savior. Our lives have to reflect that yes we are willing to be servants and even sacrifice our lives so that others can be saved, to put others first. But in the face of physical abuse at a personal level there is no redemptive results in keeping our mouths quiet. In the face of poverty and injustice here in the states we are called as a church to face it head on and speak up.

 If not then we may benefit from Jesus’ sacrifice in inheriting the kingdom of God and eternal life, which is always nice, but it will be an opportunity that we will miss to spread the Gospel by touching one who is voiceless. Amen.