

Sermon – Relentless Cry

Pastor Ed Blonski | March 20, 2023

Introduction

Re-Lent-Less Cry

*For a long time I have held my peace;
I have kept still and restrained myself;
now I will cry out like a woman in
labor; I will gasp and pant.*

Isaiah 42:14



In this 2023 church season of Lent, we're in the midst of a message series called "Re-Lent-Less".

We're looking at Bible texts that many Christians have read and meditated on at this time of year throughout the centuries.

Relentless Series

1. Where we've been

So far, we've explored Relentless Temptation.

Relentless Journey.

And Relentless Thirst.

Each Wednesday, I have shared with you a devotion based on each of these messages.

You may also have noticed that these messages have been used in the Boundless Hope devotions and the Saint Matthew Minute.

2. Where we're going

We still have a few messages ahead of us – Relentless Spirit and Relentless Help.

Today's message

Today's message is called "Relentless Cry."

1. Relentless Cry

Everyone cries. Babies when they are born cry. Parents cry when their children are born.

Adults cry when someone they love dies.

Not everyone admits they cry – especially men, for some reason.

And not everyone cries for the same reasons or even in the same way.

2. Isaiah 42:14

But this particular message – Relentless Cry – comes from Isaiah 42.

If you have a Bible, please open it or turn to Isaiah 42.

It is also up on the screen, so let's read this together:

For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant.

You see, even the Lord – who is speaking in this verse – cries!

How God Describes Himself

Actually, this part of Isaiah uses the word "cry" twice.

Isaiah 42:13

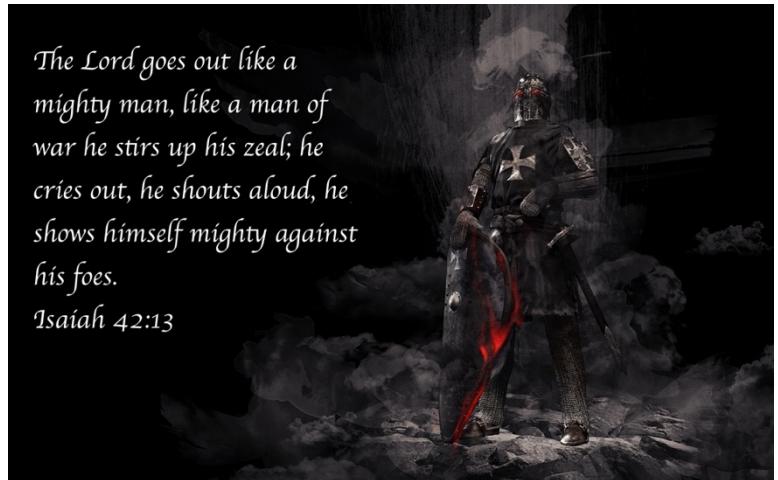
The previous verse – 13 – the prophet describes God when he says:

The Lord goes out like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his zeal; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.

1. A Mighty Warrior

There are several places in the Bible where God either is described as or even calls Himself a mighty warrior.

This verse is just one of them.



Isaiah 42:14

But then in the very next verse, God changes metaphors.

1. A Woman in Labor!

Verse 14 God describes Himself like a woman in labor.

Most likely, this brings a very specific image into your mind's eye – which is the point.

Relentless Cry - Giving Birth



A woman giving birth is exactly what God intended for women to do when He created the female out of the male's rib way back in the Garden of Eden.

The crying part, however, was not the original intent of God.

That came after, as we are told in Genesis 3:16:

I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.

Carol Burnett's Description of Birth

Men, brothers, you and I have no idea what this is really like.

Comedienne Carol Burnett tried to help us understand when she said:

"Giving birth is like taking your lower lip and forcing it over your head."

The Hardest Thing I Ever Had to Watch: My Wife Giving Birth

The hardest thing I ever had to watch was my wife giving birth to my sons.

She cried. She cried out. I had never heard a cry like that before.

It scared me.

But at least I knew that her cry was not the last word of the whole labor.

There was good to come!

These Two Pictures – Warrior in Battle and Woman in Labor

These two images – a warrior in battle and a woman in labor – are different but not that different.

And they are specifically chosen by God to describe Himself to us.

These are somewhat common images – many people know what it is to fight in a battle, and many women know what it is like to give birth.

It Gives us a picture of a Relentless Cry

The reason that God uses these images is to point us to Jesus – which is why so many of the images in Scripture are given!

The image of a warrior in battle and a woman in labor - it is these pictures that Isaiah uses to convey to us the Final Battle that Christ has fought and won for us.

And both these images – and the final battle of Christ – involve cries.

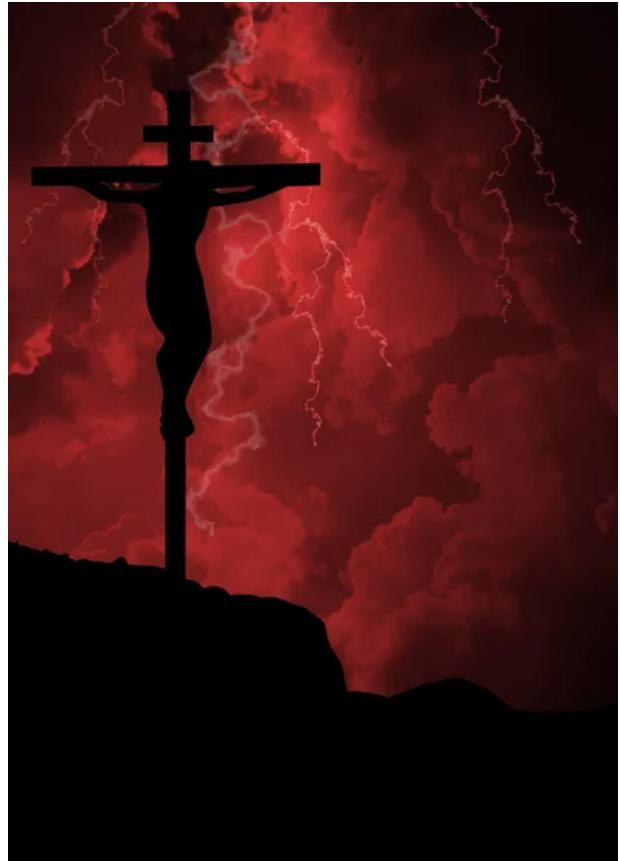
God Will Fight For You!

One thing that I hope you will remember above all else from this message is this:

That God will fight for you!

Jesus Christ – the Son of God – is a mighty warrior that will take up the battle cry for you.

He's in this fight for you.



It Will Not Be Easy

That the Son of God is fighting for you should tell you that this fight is not an easy one.

It takes the Son of God to fight it!

It takes the Son of God to overcome the enemy that causes the cry of pain and hardship that is depicted by childbirth.

1. He Has to Overcome All Your Sin

Jesus Christ the Son of God goes to battle for you.

And here's a hard truth:

Jesus Christ the Son of God goes to battle because of you.

Your sin is the reason this battle is fought.

You came into the world conceived in sin, as the Psalmist writes in Psalm 51.

King David – speaking for all of us – said:

"For I was guilty from the day I was born, a sinner from the time my mother became pregnant with me" (Psalm 51:5 The Voice).

Jesus fights the battle – goes to war – with Satan because of our original sin.

But He also fights because of the actual sins we commit every day since our mother's cries at our birth!

The sins:

- Putting anything else as more important than God
- Misusing the name of God
- Not using His Word or the opportunities to worship with other followers of Jesus
- Not honoring our parents or others in authority over us
- Hating others
- Lusting after others
- Stealing from others
- Not speaking well of others
- Not being content with what you have

Jesus goes to the cross to overcome all your sin.

Jesus goes to the cross for you – please remember that, if nothing else, from this message.

Jesus goes to the cross for you!

2. He Has to Overcome All the Sin of All People of All Time!

Even more, Jesus goes to the cross for all people of all time!

Jesus's death on the cross overcomes all the sin of all people from Adam and Even all the way to the last person born before His Second Coming!

It will Not Be Pretty

That's the Good News!

But just because its good, doesn't mean it's pretty.

1. War is Ugly

All war is ugly.

The war Jesus fights on the cross no less so.

2. Childbirth is Messy

Just as all childbirth is messy.

And, what Jesus did on the cross brought new life forth just as childbirth does – hence the image Isaiah uses in chapter 42!

3. The Cross of Jesus is Not Clean

No, the cross of Jesus is not clean, like our images usually depict.

As beautiful as our stained-glass windows are, as ornate as our crucifixes are, they are not accurate representations of the cross of Jesus.

The cross of Jesus was ugly.

The cross of Jesus was messy.

But also, the cross of Jesus was good.

But It Will Turn Out Good

The relentless cry of Christ from the cross – like a warrior’s cry in battle, like a mother’s cry in labor – is a cry for something that will turn out to be good.

1. The War Will Be Won

The battle waged on the cross was won by Christ.

2. A New Life Will be Born

The death of Jesus means a new life will be born.

Born again.

3. We Will Be Saved!

The relentless cry of Christ will be good because we will be saved.

This Is a Battle Royale!

Adventure Games Usually Have a “Final Boss”

I’ve played enough video games in my day to know a final boss when I see one.

A final boss in a video game is often the main antagonist of a game’s story and the defeat of that character usually provides a positive conclusion to the game.



Childbirth Is Similar

Childbirth appears to be somewhat similar.

1. In Childbirth, it starts out easy enough

The whole process of childbirth starts out easy enough.

2. But it gets progressively harder

But it gets progressively harder over the 9 months it takes.

Morning sickness.

Aches and pains.

Contractions that get progressively more powerful.

3. Until the last stage

And then the last stage – huge contractions until finally, with a relentless cry, the lower lip is pulled over the head!

Jesus' "Final Boss" was Death

Jesus' "final boss" in his battle royale was death itself.

He goes to war against Satan to overcome that which our sin brought into this creation.

1. He Cried Out on the Cross

And Jesus cries out from the cross – seven times, we're told in the Gospels.

2. He Died to Defeat Death

Until finally, Jesus breathes His last.

And in that last breath, when His relentless cry finally goes silent, death is defeated.

3. His Death Means Our Life

His death on the cross means our life.

To introduce yet another metaphor into this message – death has been swallowed up in victory by the death of Jesus!

And the relentless cry of Jesus in this final battle gives way to the relentless – and never ending – cry of praise in the new heavens and the new earth!

"Praise the Lord! Salvation and glory and power truly belong to our God..."
(Revelation 19:1b The Voice)

"Praise the Lord! For the Lord our God, the All Powerful, reigns supreme. Now is the time for joy and happiness. He deserves all the glory we can give Him. For the wedding feast has begun; the marriage of the Lamb to His bride has commenced, and His bride has prepared herself for this glorious day" (Revelation 19:6b-7 The Voice).