

Tenth Sunday after Trinity, August 21, 2022

Readings: Jeremiah 8: 4-12, Romans 9:30-10:4, Luke 19:41-48

Jesus Weeps for Jerusalem

Our Lord wept over Jerusalem for the destruction that would soon come upon her. For she did not recognize the time of God's visitation in Christ, who had come to bring her peace (Luke 19:41–48). Through His prophets God had consistently called His people to turn from their deceit and false worship. *"But My people do not know the judgments of the Lord"* (Jer. 8:4–12). They sought to establish their own righteousness rather than receive Christ's righteousness through faith (Rom. 9:30–10:4). So it was that God was in His temple to cleanse it, a precursor to the once-for-all cleansing from sin which He would accomplish in the temple of His own body on the cross. God grant us to know the things that make for our peace—His visitation in the Word and Sacraments—that by the Holy Spirit we may penitently confess *"Jesus is Lord"* (1 Cor. 12:1–11).

Sermon Transcript:

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So we have Jesus coming into the temple and throwing out the money changers and declaring that My house is to be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers. Now this is actually the second time that Jesus did this. John, in His Gospel, records another time that happened right at the very beginning of His ministry. Now, John, being one of the disciples of John the Baptist, was right there at the very beginning. And so immediately after the miracle in Cana, which is like the inauguration of Jesus' ministry, he's baptized by Jesus. He gets tempted. And then His first miracle is the wedding in Cana turning water to wine and then almost immediately following that He casts the money changers out of the temple.

And that's where we get the details about Him forming a cord with a whip and tossing over the tables. Here, it just says He begins to drive out those who are selling. So this is His righteous zeal for the Lord, for the worship, the true worship of God. This is not indeed even the first time back in John, that He casts out the money changers, this is not the first time the zeal of the Lord goes against the temple and what's going on in the temple. In fact, that's what we hear about in Jeremiah. That's what Jeremiah is actually speaking of and prophesying about. This is right before the destruction of the first temple in Israel, in like 587. Jeremiah is proclaiming that God is looking for holiness and righteousness in His people and He is not finding it. All He is finding is people who are seeking after their own desires and seeking after wealth and what is good for them.

God brings about the destruction of the temple. Jesus casts out the money changers. And then eventually 40 years after this event, the temple itself is destroyed again. Why? Not because God hates the people of Israel, but because the people of Israel failed to understand what the Word of God was all about and failed to understand what the temple was all about. The temple was supposed to be a place where man and God came together, where God came and gave His gifts to the people. Now, the sacrifices that were made in the temple may seem like something that man did for God. But in reality, they were God's gift to humanity because God allowed the sacrifice of a sheep or a lamb or a goat or a bull, whatever was sacrificed. He allowed the blood of that animal to take the place of the blood of humanity.

When we say the wages of sin is death, we mean that literally. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, God said on the day you eat the fruit, you will surely die. Now, they didn't die that very day, but they began the process of dying from that point on. And everybody, since that point, has died. And God in His righteousness and His holiness has every right to kill us as punishment for our sin and rebellion against Him. He would be right and just and holy, if He killed us when we sin. I know that sounds harsh, but that is the reality. That is what we need to understand about sin. It is not just, oh, I did something bad and it disappoints God. No, it is completely

offensive to God and it deserves death. But for the grace of God, He gave the sacrifice of the animals as a replacement for our deaths.

And also, He promised that there would come another. There would come one who would destroy, not just the sin or the sacrificial system, but would destroy the punishment for sin, as well. So Jesus Christ literally died on the cross because of the holiness and righteousness of God, because of His wrath for our sin. That wrath was placed upon His Son, Jesus. And because of that, we are free. But even in the Old Testament, it was all about recognizing the grace of God. It wasn't about following the laws and the Ten Commandments. As Paul says in Romans, the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness, in other words, the Gentiles didn't have the Ten Commandments. They weren't actually looking to obey God and to follow after God, but they heard the Gospel that Christ died for them and they believed and so they received the righteousness of God. Not because they followed the Ten Commandments or because they pursued it, but because it was a gift given to them. The Israelites, however, did not receive the gift because they, even though they had the Ten Commandments, they had the whole sacrificial system, they knew the Word of God, they had it all there and yet they misunderstood the point. They pursued holiness by their own efforts and their own actions. They believed that if they could fulfill the law perfectly that they would then obtain salvation. In fact, even today for those Jews that still actually believe that a Messiah is coming, the understanding is if we could just obey the law perfectly for one day, from sunset to sunset, then finally the Messiah would come. They still think that today. They're still looking for the promises of God to come, based upon their own actions. And unfortunately, many in the Christian Church have also gotten that idea.

If somebody asks you, "How do you know that God loves you?" or, "How do you know that you're going to heaven?", the answer often becomes, "Well, I'm a good person," or, "I follow God's law," or, "I come to church on a regular basis," or, "I give tithes," or, "I participate in mission work," or, "I have this mission," or, "I'm a pastor. I serve God," or whatever the case may be. Even sometimes you and me, perhaps, when we think about why am I going to heaven? We might look to our own actions and say, "Well, I'm doing pretty good." But the reality is it's not based upon what you have done, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. But it is His grace given to us in our baptisms that has given us the righteousness of God. It is ours. We are forgiven. We are free. We are safe. We know that God loves us. And we know that the wrath of God is not focused upon us because His grace was given to us in our baptisms.

And it continues to be given to us through His Word and through the bread and the wine and the body and blood of Jesus Christ. And so we are not to look to our own behaviors, but we are to look in faith to Christ. Unfortunately, our nation and a lot of people are looking to their own behavior, their own actions for salvation. We ought not to be surprised that things are going downhill pretty rapidly. Now we have been called a Christian nation in the past, but just like Israel, it doesn't matter what happened in the past. If we fail to follow after the Word of God, if we fail to trust in His righteousness and in His faith and in His Word, it doesn't matter what our history is. We ought not to be surprised that we are seeing crime and chaos and depression and anxiety and atheism rising in our nation because we have abandoned the Word of God. We have called evil, good and good, evil.

Now that doesn't mean you and me in particular, but as a whole, our society has declared that to be true. So what are we called to do? Bury our heads in the sand and pray that it'll all be over quick? We could do that, but we wouldn't be much good in that and we wouldn't be serving God in that. What are we called to do? We are called to proclaim the Word of God, no matter what. We are called to preach in truth. And most importantly, we are called to be joyful. I know that sounds weird, given everything that I just said, but we as Christians know the joy of our salvation. We have a rock that we don't stumble upon, but we stand upon and allows us to be firm. We have a joy of our salvation that hopefully will draw other people to His Word and to His salvation.

Jesus, when He drew near to the city, He stopped and He wept over it. Now this is Him entering Jerusalem, right on Palm Sunday and that's just a week before His crucifixion, five days before His crucifixion. But He weeps over the city and over the people, not because He's going to suffer and die. That's not why He weeps here. He weeps because they will not believe it. He weeps because they do not see the salvation that is coming. He weeps because they are determined to walk away from the grace of God and they are facing damnation. That is why He weeps. He weeps for people who do not hear and who do not understand.

And yet He still died for them as well as for you and for me. And so, yeah, we should weep for our nation and weep for those who do not know the Gospel. But then we should dry our tears and go forth in the joy of our salvation and proclaim the righteousness of God to a people who do not know it, so that they might know the joy and the peace that surpasses all understanding, come what may. And we know that eventually, this world will be destroyed, whether it happens in the next five years, 10 years, 20 years, or a hundred years, we know that's going to take place, but we also know that the Word of God endures forever and that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved because His mercy is for all. I pray that you and I might stand firm on the rock of salvation and might proclaim the joy of our salvation to this world so that they might know that peace.

May His grace, mercy, and peace be and abide with you always, now and forevermore until life everlasting. Amen.