

Tenth Sunday after Trinity, August 13, 2023

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.

Today in our Gospel lesson, we have sort of an unusual reading, unusual for the time that it is placed. This is immediately following Jesus entering Jerusalem. This is immediately following our text for Palm Sunday. You got Jesus riding in the donkey and the people laying down their garments and the palm trees. We think of this as sort of a Palm Sunday reading, and yet here we are somewhat in the midst of our Sundays after Trinity, the long season that goes on all the way up until Advent in end of November, first part of December. We've got this long time of the church, as we say, the non-festival time of the year. We have a lot going on about describing what the church is and how we are to live and what we are to believe and what we are called to do. This falls in line exactly with that.

This is talking specifically about a time when the people did not follow after the Word of God, and it's connected already with the Jeremiah passage. Jeremiah, if you remember, he is the last prophet of Judah, the southern nation, before they go off into exile into Babylon for multiple years, for 70 years, until they finally are allowed to return. Jeremiah had the wonderful privilege of seeing his prophecy come true, of being thrown into jail because he told the truth about what was going to happen. He accused the leaders of failing to live up to their duty. What Jeremiah is saying sounds a lot like what we ought to be saying today. Think about this. He starts, "You shall say to them, 'Thus,' says the Lord, 'when men fall, do they not rise again? If one turns away, does he not return? Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding?'" Perpetual backsliding, i.e., a people who should know better, who should know what God's Word is and know the right thing to do, they are not even trying to do the right thing. They're just in a constant backslide and they're happy with it. They're satisfied with it.

Unfortunately, if we look to the church today at large, we see this a lot. We have in our society, in our church today, we have a lot of church bodies that fail to preach the Word of God, who failed to preach the law of God. That was what was going on in Jeremiah's day. It says that they healed the wounds of my people lightly saying, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. In other words, they were saying God is angry. His wrath is upon the people of Israel because they are not worshiping God. They're not listening to the Word of God. They're following after their own ideas. Even the leaders, the priests, even the people who are in charge of the

people, their spiritual lives, they are not preaching the Word of God. We see that today. We see that in the message that is given where love is love and it doesn't really matter what God's Word says about one man and one woman in the bonds of marriage. It can be anything and everything, and that's okay as long as you love each other. And it's okay to speak ill of people if they are of the wrong political persuasion or if they are the wrong color. You can lie and cheat and accuse them of evil simply because they're the wrong group. It seems like even within our church, we are having people proclaim that the lies are true.

Now, I've been in the Chaplain Corps for quite a while, and it's a great opportunity, good and bad, to meet a lot of people who are not Lutherans. I mean, as a Lutheran pastor, I preach to Lutheran people, and I teach Lutheran people, and I go visit Lutheran people, and I spend a lot of my time with people who already are very similar in belief as me. But when I go to the Chaplain Corps, I meet a whole different group of people, including a lot of chaplains of different denominations and different churches. I'm not here to blast those churches and puff myself up and say, well, I'm so much better than they are, but we need to know what's going on within our church, within the church at large. I have a chaplain friend of mine who labeled themselves as a Christian Buddhist. I'm not quite sure what that meant, but their concept was that we can bring the religion of the East and other religions outside of Christianity and we can join them together with Christianity and say that it's okay, that all roads lead to God and lead to heaven. We have a leadership that is preaching a lie. They are not calling people to account. I have another chaplain who welcomed anybody and everybody to the Lord's Supper, including non-Christians, atheists, Muslims, and Buddhists. They were excited that the Buddhist came to receive communion at their table. This is what is going on in our church body. We have church bodies that do not preach sin as sin, and that should cause us concern.

And that is why Jesus also stood at the mount as he's entering in Jerusalem and wept over the people, wept over Jerusalem because the ones who were supposed to be preaching the Word of God were failing this time in slightly different ways. In Jesus' day, it wasn't following after false gods like it was in Jeremiah's time or in our time. But in Jesus' day, it was the teachers, the Pharisees, and the leaders who were preaching that being a good person was the point. That following the 10 commandments and following all the dietary laws and all of the clothing laws and ceremonial laws, that that was the point. If you could just follow after the law of God, that was what He wanted you to do. And you could look to yourself and your own actions and say, "I'm okay with God because I have done the law since my youth. I'm better than all you all out there because I have followed the law." It led to a self-righteousness and a sanctimonious attitude that if I do better than everybody else, then that's how I know that I'm right with God. Jesus wept over them because they saw the law, they saw the sacrificial system, they saw the worship in the temple as a work that they must do. And as long as they did it, they were okay. Forget about whether they wanted to do it or what their attitude was or why they were doing it. As long as you went through the motions and did the work, it was good.

Jesus, however, wants us to understand that the law is there to show us our sin and we need to understand that. That's what Jeremiah was preaching. That's what Jesus was teaching. That's what Paul is teaching, to remind us that the Gentiles had got the righteousness because they followed it by faith. The Jews who had the law, who grew up with the law, with the Word of God, they could not obtain the righteousness because they were looking to their own works rather than trusting in God in faith.

You see, we are called admittedly to not commit adultery, to not bear false witness, to not lie and deceive, to not covet. But more importantly, we are called to have no other gods before Him. We're called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our mind, and all our soul, to use the name of the Lord, to call upon His

name and not misuse it, and to honor the Sabbath Day. See, the most important part of the law of God is the commandment that talk about our relationship with God, who He is and what that means for us.

We also are in danger. Though we preach the law in its severity and we preach the love of God in its truth, but we also have to be careful that we do not become like the Pharisees and look to our own actions as a means of peace and hope. See, we need to understand that it is God's Word. That God's saying, "I am your God," means that every aspect of our life is to be controlled, informed, and decided by the Word of God. That the money that we use and have, that the time that we have, that the job that we do, that our attitude towards the people that we like and the people that irritate us are all to be informed by the fact that we are to have no other gods, but Him, and He loves all of us in spite of our sin, including that one that irritates you, including the one that you know does not deserve the grace of God, including the people that we don't like. We are called to look at every aspect of our life as if it is controlled by God. Not out of fear of His judgment or His punishment, not out fear that if we don't do it, we're going to hell, but out of faith, out of the joy of our salvation.

Jesus when He entered Jerusalem went directly into the temple and cast out the money changers and sat in the temple and preached. Because this was the last time where the presence of God was going to be in the temple, when He Himself was there. He cleanses that temple and prepares it for His time, for His ability and opportunity to teach there. And then that leads directly to the cross.

See, we are constantly struggling with what does God's Word really mean for us. We need to be cautious and careful about that. We need to understand that God's law is binding and does condemn us. We need to be severe in our declaration that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but we need to also be loving in the way that we do it. It does no good to point our fingers at everybody else out there and say, "You need to obey the law of God, just like how I'm doing it." That's not what we're talking about. The severity of God's law says all of us are sinners and all of us are called by God to be His children, to trust Him for our life and our hope. We are baptized, we are declared to be God's children in our baptism. We have been given the Holy Spirit. The only difference between us and everybody else out there is that, that we are baptized children of God. Everybody else out there are children of God not yet baptized, not yet knowing they're His children, not yet understanding what that means and rejecting the fatherhood of their loving God.

Our job is to declare the righteousness of God for them. Jesus at the end of His message says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." That does not mean He's the end of the law as in, we don't need to listen to it anymore, because I've heard that one as well. Well, the law is fulfilled in Christ, so I can do whatever I want because I'm free in the Gospel. That's also not what He calls us to do. We are called to hear God's Word, to love God so much, to understand how much He has forgiven us so that we in joy turn to His law and say, "How can I live in a way that is pleasing to You, to show my thanksgiving for the great and marvelous gift that You have given to me?" That is our motivation. That is what our righteousness is all about, walking forth, trusting in His fatherhood, trusting that He loves us and that He cares for us, in spite of ourselves.

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