

Trinity 10 (1-Year)

(Lk 19:41-48 ESV)

“And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, ‘Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.’”

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A blessed Lord’s Day to all of you, dear ones. I can’t tell you enough how comforting it is for me to see all of you and be with you saints of God here in this holy house today. It’s such a joyous thing to be among the redeemed receiving the gifts of our great God and Savior, Jesus—it’s such a joyous thing.

I’ve prepared a bit of a sobering homily for you today, but it’s one I think you’ll find to be edifying. And what I want to focus on is our blessed Savior’s reaction at seeing the city of Jerusalem just prior to the events of His Passion—and especially how Christ wept and spoke of the things that make for peace—things that were hidden from the eyes of the people there. Jesus says, in effect, that Jerusalem was blind to the things that make for peace—not just any kind of peace, of course, but peace with God. And our Lord’s reaction in this way during His visitation of the city is very much worthy of our meditation this morning.

Because it was, in fact, with a strong and outstretched arm, that God in Christ Jesus had visited His people there and elsewhere in the Holy Land and had done many mighty works delivering them from their enemies and afflictions as it is written that He would in the prophets. When Jesus was met with certain demon-possessed men, for example, men who were completely helpless to rescue themselves, gripped as they were by the forces of darkness, Jesus casts out these unclean spirits by the sheer power and authority of His Word, without any difficulty

whatsoever; the demons were no match for Him at all. And so also, when Christ encountered the many, many people suffering from chronic illnesses, from debilitating disease—it took only a moment for Him to restore them and make them whole. Holy Scripture bears witness to Him in this way bending and transforming creation back to be like what it was before sin came into the world, before it was governed by death and decay: Christ rebukes a deadly fever in Simon’s mother-in-law and it leaves her; the paralytic who was let down through the roof and laid before our Lord—Christ makes him to rise and walk home a new man; the poor gentleman with a withered hand—Christ restores him; the woman hemorrhaging blood for twelve years—healed; the lepers—cleansed. Even the dead are raised. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, wherever Jesus is and goes, there the kingdom, the gracious, life-giving reign of the Lord God is at hand. Truly, God had visited His people in Christ, His Son.

But when our Lord draws near and lays His eyes on Jerusalem, He weeps. Our Savior simply weeps and laments at what He sees. He echoes and even adds to the lament He voiced a little earlier in chapter 13 of St. Luke’s Gospel where He said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children as a hen gathers her brood...and you were not willing! Behold, your house is forsaken” (Lk 13:34-35). Christ sees in Jerusalem, dear ones, a rebellious, idolatrous house that would not listen to Him or any of the servants whom God Himself sent to visit them in His mercy again and again and again. His people would not hear them and turn from the wickedness of their ways. And, sadly, this is nothing new.

For from the days of old they had been consecrated to the Lord; they’d been set apart by Him and for Him out of pure grace to be unto Him a holy nation, a people of His own possession, through whom the light of His glory would shine radiant to all the world and would

draw men from every nation to salvation in Him. He brought them into His life-giving presence in the Temple and the Tabernacle prior to that, and He'd visit them in completely astonishing ways, delivering them from their enemies and the terrible afflictions they suffered. And yet, despite all these things, God's people so often plunged themselves headfirst into idolatry; they despised the Lord Who opened to them the priceless riches of His kindness. And so over and over again, in His mercy and faithfulness to His promises, the Lord would visit His people in and through the prophets whom He sent to speak His Word to them, so that they would turn from the wickedness of their ways and be cleansed and forgiven by God—so that they'd be at peace with Him once more. But over and over again they simply would not. And, amid their rebellion and idolatry, prior to being punished, they imagined they had peace with God when the truth was, dear ones, there was no peace, but only judgment to fall on them on every side.

We heard from the prophet Jeremiah earlier in our Old Testament lesson. He witnessed with his own two eyes God's people taken hundreds of miles away into exile in Babylon along with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. And, of course, before Jeremiah's time, in like manner, the wayward northern kingdom of Israel was completely smashed and wiped away by the Assyrians. And even before that, because of the great lawlessness during the time of the Judges, then too, the house of Israel was forsaken by God, and the Lord gave the ark of the covenant at Shiloh into the hands of the Philistines, the sworn enemies of His people. And so you see, dear ones, how terrible it is to be blind to the things that make for peace with God—blindness to the need for repentance, the need for His forgiveness and mercy, the need to cling to Him with all your heart and to receive those whom He sends to preach all of this in His name. There can be no doubt that blindness to these things runs deep in the history of God's people.

And no doubt you also see why the Lord Jesus weeps not only over the blindness He sees in Jerusalem but also the destruction that would fall upon Jerusalem as a result.

And this is really an important thing to understand about the Lord Jesus and about all the prophets whom He sent throughout Holy Scripture, and that is this: the prophets not only see what will unfold while it's still a long way off, but they also see the true nature of what *is* unfolding before their very eyes and what that leads to in the end. So when Christ sees the chief priests and the temple officials and the principal men of the people devoting themselves to money, defiling the Temple with their greed and lust for temporal gain, profaning and polluting what was consecrated to be a house of prayer with their idolatry and making it a den of robbers, Christ sees what finally will come. For Jesus sees that they've rejected the one true God, which means they will reject Him as His only-begotten Son, their King, their Christ, and their Lord. He knows Jerusalem will seek to humiliate Him and destroy Him by way of a Roman cross. And Jesus also knows the resultant humiliation and destruction that will come upon them in 70 AD by way of the Roman legions.

And what I would humbly pose to you today, dear ones, is this: is there any idol or unclean thing that has profaned the temple of your heart, which you know He sees and laments—and which you both know will lead to destruction in the end? Have you feared, loved, and trusted in money, medicine, your property, or politicians more than the Lord our God? If you find this to be the case, dear ones, make haste and return to the cleansing waters of your Baptism.

For our Lord visits us this day in His Word and Sacrament, in the gifts and blessings He so freely gives. And at the font we've all been cleansed from the wickedness of sin by the washing of water and the Word. There we were consecrated by Him to be His royal priests, a holy nation unto Him—even spiritual temples of the Triune God. And out of pure grace and

unimaginable mercy, you've been adopted as sons of the living God in Christ, in Him Who comes in the name of the Lord and Who bled and died for your salvation. And there is, then, no place, for any idol or unclean thing to hold sway within your heart. Only the blessed teachings of our Savior should do that. And we rightly fear, love, and trust in God above all things, for He's called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

I want to make just one more very brief point too based on Christ's example in our text. It's a minor one, but it's certainly worth pointing out. And it's that when you as a faithful, repentant Christian see and lament the idolatry and the hardheartedness of your family, your friends, your city, your country, you're doing a good work. Christ shows us that today and in this He reveals the heart of our heavenly Father, that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that they turn from the evil of their ways and live. Take heart in this, dear ones.

And to Christ be all the glory forever and ever. Amen.