

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

“And when he [Jesus] 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!’”

Here in the Gospel reading today, Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. This city, the city which housed the Temple, the center of the world for the Jews, this city is the one Jesus looks over and weeps. Why did Jesus weep? He said, ““Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

The first commandment requires you to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Really all the commandments come back to this truth. God is to be feared. God had come to his people, he visited them, and they rejected him. God’s word had been given to them, preached to them, and the Word made flesh visited them. Yet, this is Holy Week when the Gospel reading occurs. The time had come for peace to be accomplished by the shedding of Christ’s blood. The rejection of Christ would not go unnoticed. God’s wrath and judgment would come upon them.

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What Jesus said came true in 70 A.D., which is no surprise. Interestingly, one thing which was included in many Lutheran hymnals, was an account by the Jewish historian, Josephus about the destruction of Jerusalem. Even Johann Sebastian Bach wrote a cantata about this event. Of course, nowadays people try to read back into these things like Bach’s cantata and think there was an anti-Jewish spirit that well, you know the history with that and Germany.

The reason, though, these things were produced and included in the life of the church was because this warning to the Jews by Jesus about what would happen and did happen serves also as a warning to you. Rejecting Jesus is deadly serious, and it doesn’t go unnoticed. Time and again Jesus warns against this, for one is either for him or against and there is no middle ground or sitting on the fence. The lukewarm, Jesus says, he will vomit out of his mouth. It’s eternally serious and you need to hear and understand this very clearly. In this case, the siege of Jerusalem and the fall of the Temple the prophesy of Jesus in history speaks volumes to the church through the ages and to you today.

Rejecting Christ has a promise. God’s law has promises attached to it even when it pronounces God’s judgment. Now, these are different than the Gospel promises, law and gospel must be properly divided for this is “rightly handling the word of truth” as the Bible teaches. C.F.W. Walther, the first president of the LCMS, famously lectured on the topic of “The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel” and every LCMS pastor has read, or is supposed to have read, some of these lectures as he learns how to preach and what will be his pastoral care. In the very first Thesis, about law and gospel and, in an early lecture about Thesis I, Walther said, “Third, Law and Gospel differ by the promise held out by each doctrine. What the Law promises is just as a great a blessing as what the Gospel promises, namely, everlasting life and salvation. But there is a huge difference: All the promises of the Law are made on certain conditions, namely, that we fulfill the Law perfectly. Accordingly, the greater the promises of the Law, the more disheartening they are. They Law offers us that food, but not close

enough for us to reach it. . . Indeed, it says to us, ‘I will quench the thirst of your soul and satisfy hunger.’ But the Law is not able to accomplish this because it always adds: ‘All this you will have, but only if you do what I command.’”

You are warned and called to fear God. God’s judgment is real and is something to be aware of as you go through this life even if God’s judgment according to your experience may seem hidden or far off. The example of Jerusalem is a warning to you to see your sin and what happens when you see no need for repentance, and you despise God’s word. The danger for you is to grow cold to God’s word and exhortations. God’s judgment, when it seems so far off that it’s easy to think it’s no existent. The unrepentant heart grows hard and cold when it persists in sin. It becomes bold in its willful rejection of God and the new life he has given. When God delays in returning, when his day of judgment is not on the calendar or can’t be seen on the horizon the old sinful man thinks he can test God. He thinks his life has peace because his heart finds delight in what he sees best and banks on a judgment that seems so far and distant. He does wrong and it doesn’t seem to have any consequences God’s long suffering and patience cannot be abused. God’s word is clear, he can’t be mocked, and he will come in the night like a thief without warning. Then God’s judgement will be seen and known. Then God will hold him accountable who has rejected him. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God. These things were hidden from Jerusalem but are revealed to you. Repent.

Dear saints of God. Jesus looked over Jerusalem and wept but he was heading to cross where he would take your sin upon himself. Jesus knew what made for peace and he was accomplishing it. The day of visitation is here, and you too know what makes for peace, it’s the Lord, Jesus, who is your righteousness. He went to the Temple and the people were selling goods for the sacrifices. Jesus who wept over Jerusalem is the same Jesus, your Lord, who fulfilled everything the Temple was pointing to and is the true Temple made without hands. He was heading to the sacrifice as the Lamb of God. The sacrifice Jesus made cost him his life. It wasn’t as if there wasn’t a price to be paid. Your sin and the sin of the whole world can’t be paid for by the blood of lambs, goats, or the costliest of jewels and money. The only price is blood, his blood as the perfect sacrifice offered on your behalf. God’s chief work is in showing mercy to you and he has done this in Christ.

Baptized into Christ you have salvation. You have peace, this real peace of Jesus as God has given you the faith to trust in Christ whose blood atoned for your sin. Jesus lived out God’s law perfectly and he is the one who went in your place to suffer God’s wrath against your sin for which you rightly deserve eternal death and hell. You know the righteousness of God because you know Jesus and his righteousness and your righteousness through faith in him. That’s what God sees when he looks over you and does not weep but rejoices that he has redeemed you and you are his dear child and heir of eternal life all on account of Christ. That is your mind, and your life as go through this world and look over what you see around you.

In faith you hear this Gospel reading and know what this all means. When you see the warning of Jerusalem, you learn from God’s instruction to you about these things. In 2 Peter 3, God says, “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

That’s who you are as a baptized child of God who daily turns from sin and arises to live in the new righteous life you have in Christ. You fear, love, and trust in God above all things as you repent and fix your eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of your faith. You are God’s people called out of the darkness and into his marvelous light. No destruction will befall you for your Lord has paid it all. The law has its promises, to be sure, but the promises of the Gospel are given to you without condition. They are given solely by God’s grace in Christ alone to you. Those promises ring out today and every day as you behold Jesus crucified for you and

10th Sunday after Trinity—August 4, 2024

cling to him through his word and sacraments. God's chief work is in showing mercy to you and he has done this in Christ.

The antiphon of the Introit is comforting as it says, "I call to God, and he hears my voice; he redeems my soul in safety. Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you." What a joy it is to have this consolation of Christ the one who truly has made peace even unto life everlasting. Know what befell Jerusalem is not your future for your Jerusalem is above and that Jerusalem will not end but will be your dwelling place with Christ and all his saints in peace forever.

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