

Sermon for Trinity 10 – Luke 19:41-48

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Our Lord drew near to the city of Jerusalem on what became known as Palm Sunday. We know this as the day when Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. There was much fanfare as the crowds strew palm branches and clothing along with path declaring, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” as He rode along.

We can sense the jubilation and excitement in the crowd. But what was going through the mind of our Lord? What was Christ thinking about all this? Today’s Gospel tells us what Jesus said as He approached Jerusalem for the last time. He wept as He drew near to the city. Why? Because the people did not recognize the time of their visitation, the time that God through His Messiah would bring salvation to them and all people. And this causes our Lord to have pity on them so much so that He weeps. He sees them for what they are: blind to the truth. He sees them for what they are: impoverished in their rejection of God’s promises. He rebukes them. Not in a hardhearted way, not in a cruel way, but rather in mercy and in love as He does with His enemies. Not with clenched fists and through gritted teeth, but with tears in His eyes from sadness. He tells them the truth on what will happen to Jerusalem.

In forty years, our Lord’s prediction of what would happen to the Holy City for rejecting God’s visitation through Him actually happened. The result was devastating. Jerusalem was besieged at the time of the Passover celebration in the year 70 A.D. At that time, the people were gathered within the city walls for celebration, as was their custom. It was estimated that three million people were there for the festivities. By this time, the surviving apostles and the many followers of Christ as the Messiah were spread abroad to Samaria, Galilee, and the various places where the Gospel took root in the Roman Empire. But in Jerusalem, the Romans barricaded the city. They were surrounded and hemmed in on every side. There were three million people there with only the resources in the city itself. We can guess what happened next. It was famine and desperation as bad as anyone can imagine. People ate shoe leather and bird dung. After that, the houses and streets were full of people who had starved to death. When the Romans finally took the city, they sold the remaining inhabitants as slaves. The people had rejected the prophets; the people had rejected Christ and His visitation for them, and what He said would happen came to be.

Now this history was for our learning. This was an example for us. This was for our instruction. This was for us that we not fall into the same trap as they did.

Because, in one respect, we can understand Jerusalem’s unwillingness to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. It turned their whole religion on its head. He was accused of saying that He was a King, that He forbid the paying of tribute to Caesar, and misleading the nation. It was not politically expedient to follow this man who unsettled the machine. The Roman government had a sort of tolerance for the established religion of Judaism. By towing the line, the people thought they knew the things that made for peace. But this Jesus was causing disorder in the system. Even after His

death and resurrection, His followers taught that He is the exclusive and only way, truth, and life that leads to salvation in opposition to the pantheon of Roman gods. "We would gladly hear this Gospel," they say, "if it didn't endanger our reputation and livelihood. If we believe in Him, the Romans will come and take away our land and our people." Truly I say, you didn't believe and it still happened. "What the wicked man fears will come upon him."

And so it is for us. Our Lord said, "A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." "We would gladly hear Christ and believe His Word if it didn't endanger our reputation and livelihood. What if they call us closed-minded? What if they call us bigoted? What if they take away our freedom of religion?" They will. So why not trust the powerful comforting promises that Christ makes to us? "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." Trust God boldly. If much is taken from you here on earth, you are blessed. He who owns heaven and earth has all you've lost plus eternal life in store for you. This is the only thing that makes for peace. Real peace. The only peace. But if we lose God, we lose everything.

However, when we trust in God and leave everything to His will, He will care for us. God has given you house, home, wife, children — all of these you didn't create. If God gives all these good gifts to you, He will certainly preserve them. Since He wants you to have them here, He will give His blessings to you, even if it's in a way that you don't expect. If He doesn't give them to us, we still owe Him our life and our death, which by His promise brings us to eternal life. God who creates and sustains us wants us to stay alive. And if not, we have it even better in the life to come.

Beauty is vain. A good reputation is transitory. Money is fleeting. And yet, why do we trust in these things? Only the Word of the Lord endures forever. This was at the very heart of Christ cleansing the temple. God's temple was holy. Why? Because of the stones? Because of the precious vessels? Because of the piety of the priests? Because of the quality of the bought-and-sold animals sacrificed? Certainly not! God made the temple holy by the Word that was preached in it.

God calls our bodies His temple as well. What makes us holy? Our bank account? Our looks and charm? Our good works and piety? Certainly not! It is only the quality of Him who was sacrificed for you. By His forgiving you, your temple is made holy. The temple is holy because of the Word of God preached in it. Wherever the Word goes, there God certainly dwells with His grace. Wherever the Gospel is, there is a house of prayer. God's name be hallowed. His kingdom come. His will be done. Pray the Our Father that we too may recognize God's visitation. Trust not in wealth or reputation. Trust Him whose visitation is in His Body and Blood, for through faith in these you are forgiven. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠