

Sermon for Trinity 10 – Luke 19:41-48

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

“And [Jesus] entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers.” By our own devices, we can’t find peace in this world. So Jesus enters the Temple as our peace, to make way for peace. One week before the Resurrection, six days before His crucifixion, five days before He institutes His Holy Supper, four days before His betrayal, our Lord drives out those who set up a market in the Temple. He overturns the tables. He knocks over the seats of those who sold pigeons. He fashions a whip and by brute force and violence drives them off and says, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." God went to dwell in His Own House and was repulsed. Of all the places in the world that should have stood witness to His grace and truth, of all the places that should have allowed for peace between God and man, the Temple was THAT place. But the world had infected it. There was nothing to be done with this wickedness but to pronounce upon it the judgment it deserved and drive it out to the place where it belongs: outside of the Temple.

The temple. In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul gives an apt description of a temple that’s closer to home for us. “... [D]o you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. But are they, in fact, places where God’s Word truly finds a home? Or do our bodies also need to be cleansed of false idols? Do our minds ponder the familiar Words of the Holy Scriptures, or do they meditate on how to exact revenge on those who have wronged us? Is our temple a house of prayer, or a dilapidated shack where we fantasize about the things we don’t have and how we might get them? Have we harmed our temple by gluttonously overindulging in God’s provisions of food and drink? Have we used God’s good gifts of alcohol and tobacco to excess and to our physical detriment? Have we stolen time, money, or our skills from our neighbors and from God, to use for our own selfish pleasure and enjoyment? God called us to be the temple of His Holy Spirit, but we’ve made it a den of robbers! Our hearts are quick to worship any idol, but not God. We’ve robbed the time, the talent, and the treasure with which God would have us serve our neighbor for our own selfish devices!

We’ve all been catechized by this world. “Catechize” is that \$5 word which means “teach.” We’ve all been catechized by this world to be autonomous. And that’s another \$5 word for you. Autonomous comes from 2 Greek words. “Auto” = self. “Nomos” = law. The world teaches us to be a law to ourselves – to govern ourselves; to sever our lives from God and family, and be our own person. You make your own decisions. You know best. Who cares what God or your dad thinks? Autonomy is our culture’s lie, and we’ve bought it: hook, line, and sinker. I live for me, and that’s all! I look out for #1.

And while we readily buy into the world’s lies, our Lord through the Apostle Paul, reminds us that we’ve also been bought; not with gold or silver, but a more

expensive price--Christ's precious blood: "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." We don't belong to ourselves, and that's good news. The temptation to be autonomous can only drag us down to despair, entangling us in seduction and greed which will always lead to an ultimate (and literal) dead end. In contrast, God's Word promises something far more liberating and expansive: life in Jesus, who has bodily risen from the grave. He redeemed our bodies and souls, "that I may be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true." And because this is most certainly true, all empty promises of autonomy are unmasked for what they really are: lies from the father of lies.

And whether it is autonomy or another lie, the Lord still drives out the idols from His temple. He wants repentant sinners, who trust in His mercy and nothing else. Just because you were confirmed, or your mom read the Bible every day, or you once had a great pastor, does not mean you are "in the club." You vowed to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from the faith. We vainly think, "I would die for God, I would die for this faith that I confess. I would never deny the Lord and burn incense to Caesar, like the lapsed early Christians. But just don't ask me to make a financial sacrifice. Don't ask me to give up my comfortable home, my expensive car, or cable TV. Don't ask me to risk losing my job. That would mean giving up my income, and surely the Lord would understand sin for the sake of money, wouldn't He? Isn't the Lord big on making as much money as possible? Doesn't He know that if it's for money, then sins don't really count? He wouldn't ask us to be inconvenienced, would He? All that rot about confirmation vows was simply rhetoric and inflated language of a bygone era. You can't expect us to actually suffer something. Isn't Christianity about being nice to one another, keeping up appearances, and promoting our culture?"

Such thinking betrays what truly resides in our temple and who really is our god. You cannot serve two gods. You cannot serve God and mammon. Repent. Consider Jerusalem's temple at the hand of the Lord. Now be warned and on guard for His temple in you.

And yet after He acts out His judgment, after He casts out the idols, Christ's temple still remains one of grace. Repentant sinners come to Him in the Temple, and He heals us. He didn't clean out the Temple for Himself. He cleaned out the Temple so that there would be a place for sinners, a place for us.

The Temple is now clean. The Lord entered this world, died, and rose to eternal life. He has received that which He came into the world for: you. You are baptized. You are forgiven. You are declared faithful to Him by Divine declaration and promise. Now He welcomes you again to His table so that you have forgiveness for yesterday, strength for today, and hope for tomorrow. Your presence fills the Savior with joy. Amen.

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