

Pastor T.C. Arnold
10th Sunday after Trinity
Jeremiah 8 & Luke 19
August 9th, 2015

A pastor friend of mine once said that when he looks at a text that he's getting ready to preach to his parish-family, first of all, he looks in that text for the forgiveness of sins. Did you hear the forgiveness of sins in that Old Testament text for today? Let me read some it back to you: "*Why have the people turned away in their perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit... they refuse to return... no man relents of his evil... everyone turns to his own course... wise men shall be put to shame... they healed the wounded "only" lightly, saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace... they were not at all ashamed... therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord.*" Did you hear the Gospel, the sweet words of Christ's work of forgiveness? No, you didn't.

And when you listen to the readings for each of the days, listen for what is common. You will see and hear the connections between the Old Testament text and the Gospel text especially. Listen to the Gospel, "*And when Jesus drew near and saw the city (Jerusalem), 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... your enemies will set up a barricade around you... they will tear you down to the ground... they will not leave one stone upon another..."* and then Jesus goes into the Temple area and drives out the money changers with angry words and a whip made of cords.

Where is the forgiveness of sins in either one of these texts? There was no mention of Jesus going to the cross to die and save us from our sins or someone speaking a word of comfort. There was no fleeting message of hope in what Jesus did for you out of tremendous love. Nothing like that exists in these texts, so what do we do? If we are supposed to look for the forgiveness of sins and that is what I should preach about (and I hope you would expect that I would preach about the forgiveness of sins) then what do I do? Do you have any suggestions? This text is all law. Now the law teaches us and that is a good thing... to receive teaching from proclamation. But the sermon you hear on Sunday morning is more than just the law. It's also Gospel. So what do we do?

Well, did you hear the common word that both the Old Testament text and the Gospel text used this morning? It wasn't so much that there was this thing – but rather, that there "wasn't" this thing. And the thing is, "peace." Jeremiah says that the people cry out, "*Peace, peace when there is no peace.*" And Jesus says, "*Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!*" What is interesting is not that there is the "Gospel Peace" present with the people in the texts, but that it is not present in both Jeremiah and the Gospel text for today.

And even more telling for our life today is the lack of peace we experience. In that way, we get what Jeremiah is saying. We understand the words of Jesus. Though we might expect the great prophet and then our Lord to speak of peace – because we expect the tidy words of the Gospel message of comfort in the Scriptures at every turn – the truth of life lived today may more resemble the way we feel and what we are experiencing apart from truth.

The word, "peace" evokes images of calm, a life that is settled, the lack of anxiety that is produced by the day to day – or at least something that has been given to us to deal effectively with all that is unsettling. But if I were to ask you, "how is peace going in your life" – or – "is your life a peaceful life", what would you answer? Would you answer based upon your busyness that makes you crazy as you run around from one task to the other? Would answer based upon your struggles

with people in your life, arguments, can't seem to get along with others? Would you answer based on your faith and what you might think is a weak faith, a failing faith – especially in light of all that is not peaceful in the world today? If I look at the text, and do what my friend said and ask, “where is the forgiveness of sins?” and don't find it... if I can't find peace and comfort in the text... I ask again... what do I do? What do I do to share forgiveness to you?

Well, let's look at the text one more time because therein lies our answer. It's not explicit but implicit. It's Jesus, of course. He is the peace that enters into the Temple and drives out all that is evil – all that is trying to make personal gain at expense of others, and all that “perceived peace” but it's really not. Jesus comes into the Temple and cleanses it by driving out the evil. He comes in an angry way, stirs everything up, turns over tables, and drives out the devil. Jesus comes, not quietly, but with a loud ruckus into the lives of God's people to bring peace, comfort and hope. Jesus comes and says “this dwelling place is mine, so get out evil and anxiousness. Get out lawlessness and selfishness. I desire to dwell here.”

The peace that comes into our temple – that is, to us – sometimes comes more like a lion than a lamb. Have you experienced that? Peace sometimes is brought into our lives through not-so-peaceful ways. Sometimes God prunes His precious people so that they may grow in new ways. Pruning never is pleasant. Pruning hurts – something gets cut off. But why does God prune? So that so much more will grow. Sometimes God comes into our personal situations with cords and whips to ultimately bring peace to our upset lives.

This is exactly how it was on Good Friday. What about that day was not totally upsetting? What about that day was peaceful – as we may define it? Nothing. Jesus hit, accused, spit upon and denied in the early morning hours by the Sanhedrin and His disciple, Peter. Jesus standing in front of an angry crowd yelling to release Barabbas instead of Him. Jesus stripped, flogged, and made to wear a kingly garment and a crown of thorns so they could continue to mock Him. Jesus made to carry His cross a ways, then a man called Simon carried it the rest of the way to Golgotha. Jesus nailed to the tree with blood-curdling screams and bleeding dying Savior made to be the spectacle of all spectacles on that day before the celebration of the sacred Passover. Jesus brought peace to the world that day – on a day that would seem anything but peaceful. But that is how He does it.

He enters into our “peace-less” lives, and gives peace that is found in Him – only in Him. Jesus says, “*What that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!*” They didn't know. But you do. So, in this not-so-peaceful life, go to Jesus. He did all His work for your salvation through a huge ruckus. But that's what we can expect in this life lived in the midst of all that is wrong. He enters this life, for you. He enters this world, for you. He loves you and saves you, not because you have a peaceful life – on the contrary. Rather, because Jesus is the bringer of true peace. Peace, not as a slower pace, not as a less anxious day for tomorrow. But rather peace in confidence that your Lord remains your Lord. And with Him, there is nothing you cannot take on together. He is your companion at every turn. He is your salvation at every moment.

So where is the forgiveness of sins? It is in what comes. Jesus. Jesus comes and bring peace when there is no peace. Jesus comes to bring peace even when the world doesn't know it. You know it because you know Jesus. And that peace gives you the confidence that you can rest assured that you – yes you – all of you, have the forgiveness of sins... that you are forgiven... that you have eternal life. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.