

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity
St. Luke 19:41-48: "See How Jesus Loves You!"
August 20, 2017 | Saude & Jerico Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Almighty and everlasting God, by Your Holy Spirit You have revealed to us the Gospel of Your Son, Jesus Christ: We beseech You so to enliven our hearts that we may sincerely receive Your Word, and not make light of it, or hear it without fruit, but that we may fear You and daily grow in faith in Your mercy, and finally obtain eternal salvation; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen. (ELH, p. 160)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for this morning is taken from the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

And when [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! 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." / And He 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." / And He was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy Him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on His words. (ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Jn. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who saves us from destruction and from despair, dear fellow redeemed:

Jesus had been teaching and preaching for the better part of three years. He had gained many disciples, but also many enemies. While He was walking in the temple, the Jewish leaders surrounded Him and said, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly" (Jn. 10:24). Jesus replied, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand" (vv. 27-28). At this, they picked up stones to kill Him, but He escaped from them and traveled with His disciples to the other side of the Jordan River. Jerusalem with its heightened tensions did not seem a safe place for Jesus to be.

But then He received word that his friend Lazarus from the town of Bethany was sick. The problem was that Bethany was only about two miles away from Jerusalem. His disciples cautioned Him; they knew what His enemies would try to do to Him if He went there. Would He go? Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him" (11:11). Jesus was referring to Lazarus' death and His plan to raise him to life again. When He arrived in Bethany,

Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days. His sisters Martha and Mary were overcome with sorrow. They told Jesus what must have been running over and over again through their minds, *“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died”* (vv. 21,32).

When Jesus saw the grief of Mary and the whole crowd, *“he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’”* (vv. 33-34). Then Jesus did something unexpected: He wept. He cried right out in the open, in view of everyone there. Why did Jesus do this? He is God! Why would One who controls the wind and the waves, who kills and makes alive (Deut. 32:39), who knew what He was about to do – why would this One cry? Because a moment later, He commanded Lazarus to come forth from the tomb. And Lazarus did. So why the tears when life and joy were in view?

I

Have you ever felt like the weight of the world was on your shoulders? That is just an expression. But Jesus actually did feel the weight of the world on Him. Isaiah tells us that He bore every grief and carried every sorrow (Is. 53:4). All the troubles and sins of the world rested on Him. And you can only imagine that the weight became heavier and heavier the closer He came to His hour, to the time that He would suffer hell and death for everyone.

That time was fast approaching when Jesus arrived in Bethany. He saw what pain and distress Death—that great enemy of mankind—had caused. And He tasted there the bitterness of His own impending death. He knew what it would do to another Mary, His mother, and how terribly His brothers the disciples would be shaken. *“He was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.”* He wept. And that wasn’t the last time.

Jesus left Bethany without incident, though the Sanhedrin was actively plotting His death. Now, He no longer walked openly among the people, but went to stay north of Jerusalem near the wilderness (11:54). When the time of the Passover came that spring, the people in Jerusalem wondered if Jesus would come. Many hoped He would, so they could interact with and listen to the One who could even bring back the dead. Others probably hoped He would stay away, because they knew what their leaders wanted to do to Him.

Jesus did come. He first stopped in Bethany, where He shared a meal with His friends. When word about this got to Jerusalem, many came to see both Him and Lazarus (12:9). This was on a Saturday, with the Passover just six days away. The next day, Jesus prepared to go to Jerusalem. By now, everyone knew about His arrival. Great crowds went to meet Him with palm branches in hand, and singing *“Hosanna to the Son of David!”* On a carpet of cloaks and branches, Jesus rode forward.

As He looked up at the great city that sat proudly upon Mount Zion, we imagine what thoughts must have filled His mind. This was the city of David, the city of God’s holy presence in the temple. This was the city of many faithful patriarchs and prophets. But this city that He loved was about to turn against Him in the worst way. This is where He would die, right outside these walls. This is where all the forces of evil would converge upon Him, and He would endure the agonizing separation from His own heavenly Father. And just as He had not long before at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus again wept. *“He wept over [the city], 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."

He wept because He could see the future. He knew what was in store for Jerusalem. He described it just as though He was sitting there watching forty years later. He said, "[Y]our 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." This is what happened in the year 70. The Jews had rebelled against the oppressive rule of Roman governors. They had in their minds the glory days of the Maccabees, when Israel had won its independence. The LORD God would fight for them again! He would have mercy on His people!

But they didn't see. They didn't comprehend what they had done. The temple curtain had torn for a reason when Jesus died. The temple sacrifices should have ceased, since the Lamb of God had been slain for sin, once for all. Peter told the crowd on Pentecost, "[Y]ou crucified and killed" Jesus the Messiah (Ac. 2:23). Many listened. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they believed and were baptized. But others rejected the Gospel. Led by men like the murderous Saul, they attacked the Christians, driving many of them out of Jerusalem. Those who remained evacuated the city when they saw trouble brewing with the Romans. By this time, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke had been written and circulated. The Christians knew what Jesus had said. They knew that destruction was coming upon Jerusalem. When the Romans laid siege to the city, the Christians had all safely relocated. The Lord had preserved them.

But the people within the city were not preserved. They ran out of food and water. They resorted to eating the leather of their sandals and worse. The dead multiplied. The siege lasted for months until the Romans finally breeched the walls. With swift violence, they cut down soldier and citizen alike. They set fire to homes, to the palace, and to the grand, beautiful temple. Everything burned. So many died. This destruction happened in August of the year 70, which is why this Gospel reading is appointed to be read in August.

II

Why did this happen to the people of Jerusalem? Through tears, Jesus said that this was *"because you did not know the time of your visitation."* What was *"the time of [their] visitation"*? It was His visitation. It was the long-promised coming of the Messiah to save them. He wept because He loved them. He loved them to death—all the way to His death. Would that they had known *"the things that make for peace"*!

Do you know these things? Yes, you do. But it is easy to forget them. It is easy to get lazy in your faith, so that your confession comes from habit and not from the heart. It is easy to take God's Word for granted and not regularly apply it to your life. It is easy to fall into sin like into a nice, warm bed, and get comfortable in it. It is easy to put off repentance, because "there will be plenty of time for that later." But God does not say "later," He does not say "tomorrow." He says, *"Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2Cor. 6:2). Now is the time to repent. Now is when the Holy Spirit brings absolution and salvation to the humble and contrite.

The Lord does not have to weep over you because He has saved you. He suffered your hell for you. He died your death for you. Think of Him on the cross, nailed there for you. **See How Jesus Loves You!** Will you reject His love? No! Without Jesus, there is no hope, there is no salvation. Without Jesus, there is only pain and destruction.

But with Jesus, there is comfort through every trial and every terror of life. When Jesus stood there weeping after the death of Lazarus, the Jews remarked, *"See how he loved him!"* (Jn. 11:36). Then He did something to show His love. He broke the grip of death with a word, and Lazarus arose. Jesus knows the terrible pain of death. He felt it Himself. But He conquered it, and He promises to awaken you and your loved ones with a word, just as He did Lazarus.

And when you weep for those who have rejected the faith like the inhabitants of Jerusalem – whether it be your children or your parents, your relatives or friends – remember how Jesus wept for sinners. He is not uncaring. He has *"no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live"* (Ez. 33:11). He *"desires all people to be saved"* (1Tim. 2:4). The Lord hears your prayers. He does not forget His children, especially those who have already been brought to Him through Holy Baptism.

It is okay to weep for those who have fallen away, and for those who are now at rest. But weep with faith in your Savior and His promises. Take refuge in Him. Commit your cares to Him. Jesus will not forsake you. He redeemed you. He intercedes for you and all your loved ones at the right hand of God. He continues to fight the good fight for your souls. **See How He Loves You!** With a love that will never change.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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