

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity – Pr. Faugstad sermon  
St. Luke 19:41-48: “We Need Continuous Cleansing.”  
August 7/8, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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Lord, teach us to recognize the time of our visitation and to understand what serves for our peace. Be gracious to us, and be gracious to [all] people. Let Your face shine upon us, for Jesus' sake. Amen. (*Book of Family Prayer*, p. 513)

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

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*The sermon text for today is taken from the nineteen 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. <sup>(ESV)</sup>

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

In Christ Jesus, who comes to cleanse us of our sins through His powerful Word of forgiveness and life, dear fellow redeemed:

“I know things have been tough for you lately, and you haven’t been able to do what you usually do. I’d like to help you with something, and I don’t want you to say ‘No’ until you’ve thought it over for a bit—I want to come over and clean your house.” At first, you didn’t think you could accept such an offer from your friend. It would be too much! You feel embarrassed how much things had slipped at home since you became ill. But you also realize how much you could use the help. You accept the kind offer.

So your friend shows up a few days later with a dedicated cleaning crew. You smile through tears and thank them for coming. “We’ll have the house clean in no time!” they say. You open the door and wait for them to go in, but no one does. They are busy unpacking ladders and hoses and brushes. They start spraying and scrubbing the *outside* of the house! Of course you are grateful for their efforts, but the real problem was not on the outside—you hadn’t even been thinking of that. The work that really needed to be done was on the *inside*.

On the outside, the city of Jerusalem looked great. It stood on top of a tall hill, tall enough to be called “Mount Zion.” It was surrounded by sturdy walls. It was one of the last cities conquered

by King David (2Sa. 5:6-9), and it impressed him so much that he turned it into the capital city of Judah. It was here that David built a great palace, and it was here that his son Solomon built the temple of the LORD.

When the crowds traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover at the time of today's text, they looked upon the city with awe. "Look how strong and majestic it is! Look at the magnificent gates and the glistening temple!" But the city was not as strong as it appeared. It was full of pride and selfishness and spiritual decay. Its religious leaders hated Jesus and cared only about their own standing and power. If Jesus came to Jerusalem for the Passover, they were ready to pounce on Him and kill Him (Joh. 11:45-12:19).

Jesus did not gasp with delight when He laid eyes on this city. Instead He wept over it, saying, "*Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace!*" Because of its unbelief, the city would be utterly destroyed. Its people did not know the time of their visitation. Many had rejected Jesus the promised Messiah, the Son of God incarnate, who had come to save all sinners. The city looked great on the outside, but inside the walls was a different story.

The same was true for the temple. It was the holy habitation of God, where He visited His people with His grace and received their sacrifices and prayers. The Jewish people were proud of the temple like you are proud of your church. It was a beautiful building. Pious people streamed in and out of it day after day bringing their sacrifices and offerings. Everything seemed great. But not to Jesus.

When He came to the city on Palm Sunday, He took a look inside the temple (Mar. 11:11). What He saw kindled a righteous anger inside of Him. The temple courts had been turned into a marketplace! There sat money-changers and sellers, calling to the Jews who had recently arrived at Jerusalem: "This is the place to exchange your money! I give you the best rates! You'll find no better pigeons for this price!"

The next day Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold and to overturn the tables of the money-changers (Mar. 11:15). "*My house shall be a house of prayer,*" He cried, "*but you have made it a den of robbers!*" The temple was for the Word of God, not for worldly commerce. It was the place for spiritual gain, not for greed.

This wasn't the first time Jesus cleaned out the temple like this. He had done the same thing three years earlier (Joh. 2:13-17). So we see that the problem hadn't gone away. The sellers and money-changers had returned. The location was too ideal. The potential for profit was too great. They weren't going to pass up a chance like this. And weren't they really providing a service to the people of God by conducting their business there? They tried to justify the very practices that God condemned, and the religious leaders nodded their approval.

The problem in the temple reflected the problem of these leaders. The chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees thought they were righteous, and most of the Jewish people agreed. But the same week that Jesus wept over the city and cleaned out the temple, He said to those prideful religious leaders: "*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.... For you are like whitewashed tombs,*

*which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness" (Mat. 23:25,27).*

Can the same thing be said about you and me? The people around you can see what you are like on the outside, and they probably think you are a good person. You're nice and thoughtful and helpful. And of course those are all good things; those things are important. How we look on the outside matters. But that isn't all that matters. How we are on the outside cannot make us right before God. How we are on the outside cannot save us. So how do things look on the inside?

Like it was for Jerusalem and for the temple and for the religious leaders, what's happening inside us is not always so good. Inside we harbor bitterness and anger and dark thoughts toward others. We have lustful desires and greed and often feel discontent about our station in life. We don't want to serve our neighbors like God calls us to do. We don't want to put others first. Sometimes we just want to walk away from our responsibilities and focus on what *we* want.

We hide these thoughts from others. We don't like to let people see what's really happening on the inside – the selfishness, the anger, the pride. We are good at covering these things up and making everything appear neat and tidy in our lives. But our inner turmoil, our inner uncleanness, is not hidden from God. He sees all. He knows all. That's why He sent His eternal Son down to earth to become a Man.

Jesus came to save us from our outward sins of word and action and the inner sins of our mind and heart. To be our Savior, He had to be a spotless Substitute. He had to be perfectly holy on the outside and on the inside. And He was. He never sinned, not even in His thoughts. He perfectly obeyed the will of His Father; He perfectly kept His holy law.

And that perfect obedience led Him to the cross to die for the sins of all people. Whatever your sins may be, even the secret ones that you have harbored in the depths of your inner being – Jesus died for them all. He shed His holy blood to wash away all the evil things you have done, said, and imagined.

This is what Jesus went to Jerusalem to accomplish. He knew that many there would reject Him. He knew the horrible things waiting for Him behind those impressive walls. But He still went forward. He entered that city to give Himself for the sinners there. He came to die for their sins, even their sin of putting Him on the cross. *"Father, forgive them,"* He said, *"for they know not what they do"* (Luk. 23:34).

Jesus came to forgive. He came to cleanse people of their sins, inside and out. And this is what He still comes to do today. He comes into our church through His Word, warning us of judgment if we continue in our sins and refuse to repent. Through the law He exposes our sins, all the darkness and doubt we have allowed to linger inside and cloud our thinking. He points out our faulty plans and priorities. He comes to clear out the clutter, so that the house of our worries and sins is prepared for much better things.

He turns this unclean house into a place fit for His holy presence. He comes to abide with us with His grace and forgiveness. He comes to apply His cleansing blood to each and every one of our sins. He comes to cover us in His perfect righteousness. You and I won't be judged by what we have done or failed to do on the outside, or by what we have at times allowed to fester on the inside. We will be judged by what Jesus accomplished for us.

By faith in Him, we are credited with His holy life. By faith in Him, we are saved from our sin and eternal punishment which He cancelled on the cross. By faith in Him, we have the certain hope of eternal life secured for us by His resurrection. Jesus does not weep over those who trust in Him. He rejoices in them.

Even when you and I fall again into sin, Jesus does not turn His back on us and walk away, just as He did not turn His back on Jerusalem and the temple. He walks right into the middle of our sin and trouble through His Word, and He brings us the peace of His forgiveness and salvation. Jesus never stops cleansing us of the things that keep us from hearing and growing in His Word of grace.

**We Need Continuous Cleansing**, and Jesus promises to provide it. He is preparing us here and now for the time when we will have perfect peace in His heavenly city and will worship Him with perfect praise in His heavenly temple.

*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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