

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord spoke to His people through the Prophet Jeremiah. His Word was a Word of strong condemnation. They held fast to deceit. They didn't hold to the truth, or practice it. They refused to return. They desired to go the way that they thought best, to live their lives as they saw fit, to worship in the way that made sense to them, rather than to go in the Way that pleased God. And although they lived wickedly, no man repented of his wickedness. Which is to say that they rejected the Word of the Lord.

The same Prophet through whom the Lord rebuked Israel would watch as Jerusalem was destroyed, and as Judah was taken into captivity. The wise men were ashamed, they were dismayed and taken. They claimed to be wise, but they rejected the Word of the Lord, so they had no real wisdom.

As we prepare for the Great Forty Day Fast, as the violet pendants on the altar testify to the ashen season that soon comes, we do well to consider the fate of Judah. For we too have the Word of God, the very Word that they had. But our nation breaks the Word of God in ways that Judah couldn't have imagined.

The murder of the unborn, the normalization of perversity, the confusion of even the most basic truths like male and female, the legalization of gambling and drugs, the public restrictions on the proclamation of the only true faith, the Christian faith, and the complete rejection of God's Word all testify to the condemnation our nation justly deserves.

Just as Jerusalem was justly destroyed, and the people taken into captivity, so our nation has rightly deserved the destruction visited on Jerusalem, or even that that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah. For the abominations practiced there are rampant among us. But it is not for the sins of our nation that each of us will be judged.

When we stand before God on the Day of Judgment we will be called to give account for our own sins, the sins that we have committed daily, the sins that break the Law of God, the actual sins that flow from the sinful nature each of us has inherited.

So the Word of God calls us each to consider our sins. St. Paul teaches that now we see dimly, as in a mirror. Consider, then, your reflection in the mirror that St. Paul provides: The Apostle writes to describe perfect love. Love does not envy. But if you're honest, you must confess that you have envied. Love does not parade itself, love is not puffed up, love does not behave rudely, love does not seek its own, love is not provoked, love thinks no evil.

The truth is that every fallen man, and that includes each of us, has failed to do what the Apostle describes. And more, each of us has done what God forbids. The just Words of condemnation God spoke through the Prophet Jeremiah, the Words fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, the horrible Words of Divine condemnation, are rightly words for each of us.

Scripture records Jerusalem as the center of the land God promised to Israel when He led them out of captivity in Egypt. Although taken into bondage in Babylon for their apostacy, still, in love, the people God chose were returned to Jerusalem. But when the God who chose Israel was

born of a virgin and walked among them, when God took on Flesh and dwelt among men, He spoke of the City of Peace by condemning her: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!”

He knew. He saw the sinful and murderous tendencies of the city He had so freely given Israel. For sin was in the hearts of men. And still He who never paraded Himself; He who was not puffed up but humbled Himself; He who never behaved rudely but always in love for God and for neighbor; He who did seek His own, rather who sought forgiveness and life for all men; He who was not provoked, went to Jerusalem. He went silently as a lamb to the slaughter.

He who never thought evil but only good did not avoid the city that killed the Prophets and stoned those sent. He told His disciples “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him.” And He went, willingly, just as He promised He would. He willingly went to His death.

The Lord’s Words were clear, but the Twelve couldn’t understand. The saying, St. Luke records, “was hidden from them.” In their fallenness they couldn’t see. But St. Luke records that there was one who did see. The blind man saw. He cried out believing.

He cried out using the Messianic Title for the Savior promised of old. He cried out for mercy, for healing, the very thing that Christ took on Flesh to bring – mercy and healing to lost and condemned creatures.

That mercy would be shown as David’s Son and David’s Lord was denied mercy, as He was delivered to the Gentiles and mocked and insulted and spit upon, then scourged and killed. But as the Prophets also promised, on the third day He would rise again.

In His perfect life, in His suffering and death, in His glorious resurrection, we see the love that St. Paul describes – perfect love. We see the love that rejoices in truth, the love that bears all things, the love that never fails, even when nailed to the cross.

That love is God’s love for you, dear Christian. He took on Flesh for you. He went to Jerusalem for you. The One who bears all things bore His cross, just as He bore your sins. He went to Golgotha for you, for it is Christ who is Love, Love Incarnate, Love that endures all things. He endured suffering and death for you. He died to take away your sins, that not destruction, not condemnation, but forgiveness and life be yours.

Just as He healed the blind man, so does the Lord heal you. The Risen Lord has mercy on you. He shows you the love that surpasses understanding, perfect love, as He visits you with His Gifts and His grace. He gives you the faith that cries out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

And He who gives you that faith bestows upon you His mercy, according to His promise. He is your Savior. He is the Promised One. And in love He says to you “Your faith has made you well.” That faith leads you to follow Christ, and to glorify God. You join in the blessed processional with the healed blind man, and the One, Holy, catholic and Apostolic Church, the

processional that leads through this life to the Jerusalem above. And the Spirit that fills you in your baptism, and the faith you are given, lead you to show the love you have received to others – to those around you. For love never fails.

That which is Perfect has come. Christ came to redeem you. And the same Christ that taught the Apostles, the same Christ that healed the blind man, comes to you in His Mysteries. He comes to you in the Divine Gifts through which He gives you forgiveness and life. And although now you know only in part, soon you shall know just as you are also known, for now abide faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

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