

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

The people trusted in lying words that could not profit. Because God had caused His Temple to be built there, the people believed they could live as they chose, and sin wantonly. Adultery and falsehood, coarse idolatry and theft were common. The chosen of God developed their own religious system that neglected the faith that alone can save. And the people justified their sins because of their proximity to God's House, saying "the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord."

Theirs was a sin of presumption. They presumed God's favor because He had chosen them. They presumed grace because of their piety, false though it was - which, at its base, is simply to trust that God will overlook sin, even that God would reward transgression, which is blasphemy, a violation of the entire First Table of the Law.

So God rebuked Judah by the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah. He brought God's strong Word of condemnation. He stood there, in the heart of Jerusalem, and called the people to repentance. "Amend your ways and your doings", God gave the Prophet to proclaim. God saw what they were doing. God saw their hearts.

He did not see them simply because they were nearby His Temple. God's sight is not limited by distance or time. God is omniscient. He knows all. He sees all. He sees through eternity. He sees through the false and fraudulent excuses by which men delude even themselves. "Behold", God declares, "I, even I, have seen it." The people clung to their sinful ways. As the Prophet warned, Jerusalem was destroyed.

So it was, 600 years later, that the Incarnate Lord wept over Jerusalem. It was there, in the heart of Jerusalem, that the new and better Jeremiah, the Prophet promised of old, the new and better Moses, God Enfleshed, stood and called the people to repentance. The One who came unto His own but His own received Him not promised the violent destruction of the City of Peace for the sins of the people.

They counted their provision of sacrifices as a good and God pleasing work, even an aid to the Divine Service. They presumed grace because of their piety, false though it was. But it was delusion. Their prices were inflated, their sacrifices blemished. Their trade was not in service to God at all, for their hearts were not in service to Him. So God drove them out of His Temple, for what was to be a House of Prayer they had made a den of thieves. And soon thereafter Jerusalem was completely destroyed again, the Temple never to be restored.

The 2000 years between then and now does not cloud God's perfect vision. He still sees clearly, as He saw in the beginning, and will see, world without end. He knows your thoughts as fully as He knew theirs, He sees your works as clearly as He saw theirs. He sees through the excuses you have made for your shortcomings, the justifications you have offered for falling into temptation and sin. He sees your heart.

The thoughts, the words, the behaviors of the flesh you too have indulged, calculating that the good things you have done outweigh the bad, presuming that the pious things that you have done cover the impious. The old Adam in you has stood with the men of Jeremiah's time and said

“the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these.” But like those buying and selling in the Temple, your presumption of grace has a fatal flaw. So hearken to the Words of the Prophet: “Amend your ways and your doings!”

God, the only true God, is a God of grace. In love He bestows His favor on men. And while there is always Law for the sinner, there is Gospel hope for all who believe. And for you who believe, faith finds joy in the Law. So David writes “O how I love Your Law, it is my meditation all the day.” For faith knows that the Law is good. It provides a description of perfect righteousness, a description of Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Law, Christ, who imputes His perfect keeping of the Law to you.

As a manifestation of His love, even the Words God gave to Jeremiah to speak to an apostate Judah included a promise, a promise of peace and wellbeing for the faithful. And so too the Words our Lord spoke outside of Jerusalem. He spoke of things that make for peace. He spoke of the time of His visitation.

He was not referring to peace with the Romans. The peace He promised, the peace He brings, is peace with God, a peace that surpasses understanding, a peace only He can give. He spoke of His Visitation, His miraculous taking on of human flesh to dwell among men to redeem them. And the blessing is for you, O Redeemed of Christ, for He is still God With Us.

His visitation brings peace by the forgiveness of sins. It brings you peace by the forgiveness of all your sins. For by the Blood of Christ alone are dens of thieves made into the House of God, forgiven, redeemed, sanctified, made the very Temple of the Holy Spirit. Only He can make sinners saints.

Believing in Him, redeemed by His salvific work, it is you, dear Christian, who can do what the Apostle exhorts: present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For you, having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

As the Lord drove out those buying and selling in the Temple, cleansing it, so has He cleansed you. He cleansed you in the waters of Holy Baptism, driving out your fallenness and your sins, and filling you with the Spirit and His Gifts. For no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. It is one and the same Spirit that works all these things, distributing to you individually as He wills.

By the Holy Spirit, by the faith that God alone can give, seeing with the eyes of faith, you know the Things that make for your peace, the Things that bring Christ. And you know the time of your visitation, as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity that made the Holy of Holies truly Holy places His Body with Bread and His Blood with wine for you to eat and drink. And you who are made the Temple of God by the indwelling of His Spirit eat and drink Christ, the One who by His cross and empty tomb makes for your peace, your peace with God, now and forever.

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