

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

The New Testament records only two times, that experiencing profound sadness, the Lord wept. The Scriptures do not mention Him weeping during His flogging or His crucifixion. But at the death of Lazarus, the Lord wept. And then again, before His Triumphal Entry, He wept as he drew near the city and saw Jerusalem. In both cases they were tears of compassion, tears of mercy.

St. Luke reports that the Lord was on the road that came down from the Mount of Olives when He saw the city and wept. 600 years earlier, the Prophet Jeremiah lamented from the same place, as he saw the City of Peace in ruins. Now Jeremiah's Lord draws nigh unto the rebuilt city, the rebuilt walls and gates, the rebuilt Temple, knowing the horrors and the destruction that lie ahead – both for the Holy City, and for Him. But He does not weep for Himself, as he will tell the Daughters of Jerusalem: “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

Jeremiah was sent by God to stand in the gate of the Temple and to call Judah to repentance. They would not listen. So too was the first recorded sermon of Christ “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” He preached repentance to save them from destruction, that they amend their ways and their doings and return to the Lord their God. Judah refused to hear Jeremiah. Jerusalem was destroyed, the Promised Land was taken away from Israel and given to pagans. Israel was led into captivity.

And six centuries later, Israel would not hear Jeremiah's Lord. He called them to repentance. He did so in love and in mercy. But they knew neither Him nor the power of His Word. He came to His own, but His own received Him not. Weeping, He proclaimed to the Holy City “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace!”

But they did not know. They could not know. For they were hidden from their eyes. He was teaching daily in the Temple. They heard His Words, and yet sought to destroy Him. Sin brought blindness, blindness that stopped them from seeing the Promised Messiah, blindness that stopped them from truly hearing the Gospel He proclaimed, blindness that would bring destruction upon them once again, as the Holy City would again be desecrated and destroyed.

He warned them. He foretold the embankment being built around the city. He prophesied the razing of Jerusalem, leaving not one stone upon another. And what He foretold came to pass. As a testament to their unbelief, as a monument to their rejection of the Promised Savior, a pagan shrine stands to this day on the ruined Temple mount in Jerusalem.

But that men be saved, the Promises of God given through the Prophets were fulfilled in the Holy Incarnation and the miraculous, sinless birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Seed promised to Adam and Eve had come. The Arm of the Lord was revealed. The shoot from the stump of Jesse sprang forth. David's Son and David's Lord was at hand. God came to His people. But in their sin, they did not know the time of their visitation. They would not repent.

Their ruin should cause each of us to consider ourselves. Jeremiah's call to repentance is a call to you too. So also is our Lord's exhortation “Repent!” It is a warning to you. As St. Paul

writes, “I do not want you to be ignorant...” about the due consequences for sin. Israel was chosen by God and blessed. But they followed their own fallen desires rather than the Way of Life. And so it is with every sin which you have committed, be it a sin of omission, or a sin of commission.

Beware, lest by your sin you be blinded, and you not know the salvation of God that He freely gives, and the Mysteries by which He gives it. Beware, lest you fail to hear the Word of God and repent, and with the Jerusalem of old you too be destroyed.

And see, dear Christian, see with the eyes of faith the things that make for your peace. See the Lord weep as He crests the hill and sees the Holy City, prepared for destruction. See the sham trial, the blasphemy, the scourge and unjust verdict. See the Way of Suffering, the Lord stumbling, Golgotha, the Lord thirsting, His final cry. See the cross, for as violent as these things were, these are the things that make for your peace, your peace with God.

And see the empty tomb, that to this day testifies that He is risen. See the bright clouds open, to receive the King of Kings and Lord of Lords into His rightful celestial throne. See the Lord weep no more! See the angelic host and the Church in Glory around that throne, in unending joy and peace and worship and praise, always seeing the face of God. And see there a place prepared for you, as you hear and believe that what the Lord did, He did for you. Thanks be to God; He is the God that visits His people.

And rejoice, dear Christian. For the God that visited Israel still visits His people. By the leading of His Spirit, the Spirit that works in you, the Spirit that distributes gifts to each one individually as He wills; in His mercy the same Spirit has brought you to this house of prayer this day. It is here that God visits you, His people. He comes as His Saving Word is proclaimed. He comes as the forgiveness of sins that He won on the cross is applied to fallen men, and your sins are forgiven. He makes you saints. He comes by the power of His Spirit in baptismal waters.

And He comes on the Paten and in the Chalice, as He has promised, the Christ that stood in the Temple sands now present in this Temple, placing His Body with bread and His Blood with wine, that you eat and drink, that your sins be taken away, that your faith be made strong, and that you know the time of your visitation. For here, where God has promised, He freely gives you the things that make for your peace.

The Promised Land was taken away from Israel. The Temple is no more. Only rubble remains to this day. But the true Israel, the One Holy catholic and Apostolic Church, you, dear Christian, God bids you enter the house which is called by His Name, this house of prayer, to approach this altar, where He makes Himself present. And He makes you the new and better Temple, the Temple of His Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God fills you. He bids you draw nigh unto Him, and He blesses you, He blesses you here, here in this place of His visitation.

And soon, when it pleases the Lord to take His Church home, soon you will see the better Promised Land, the New Creation, that radiancy of glory, that bliss beyond compare, the New Jerusalem, Jerusalem the Golden, that dear land of rest, which the God who visits His people has prepared for you.

St. Luke 19:41-48

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity / Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, 2020 A. ✠ D.

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