

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 19:41-48
August 25th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

My House Is a House of Prayer

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, Who by Thy Holy Ghost hast revealed unto us the gospel of Thy Son, Jesus Christ: We beseech Thee so to quicken our hearts that we may sincerely receive Thy Word, and not make light of it, or hear it without fruit, as did Thy people, the unbelieving Jews, but that we may fear Thee and daily grow in faith in Thy mercy, and finally obtain eternal salvation, through Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the Church's year there is only one Gospel reading that is used twice: the triumphal entry of our Lord + Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. We hear that historical narrative both on the first Sunday in Advent, and on the last Sunday in Lent—the Sunday before Holy Week and the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord. So then, we have that Gospel in both the Christmas cycle and in the Easter cycle.

Today, we hear the events of that day from a different perspective; from the pen of the Evangelist St. Luke. The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew records for us the reaction of the people of Jerusalem. They were singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David!", "Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord!" and they were cutting off palm and olive branches to spread before our Lord, as well as, spreading their cloaks before the colt, the foal of a donkey upon which our Lord + Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem. It was a happy and joyous scene. The Lord + Jesus—the Messiah for Whom everyone had been waiting—had finally come to Jerusalem. He rode into town in triumph; as a conquering king would have rode back into the city after defeating all of his enemies. The Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew records our Lord's entry into Jerusalem as a victory march to the sound of singing and rejoicing.

The Evangelist St. Luke records a different perspective than the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. He records the events of the day from the perspective of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Well, what does the Evangelist St. Luke write about our Lord's reactions to the cheering crowds? Is our Lord smiling and waving; soaking up the adulation? No, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ is weeping. And this is one of those cases where the English does not do a good job of portraying the meaning of the Greek word that we translate as "wept." It is like the word "love." In English we have one word for love, but Greek has several words, all meaning different types of love. The same is true of the word "wept." The New Testament records our Lord's weeping twice (three times if you count His cry of "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" from the cross). The Apostle and Evangelist St. John records that our Lord wept when Mary tells Him to come and see the place where they laid Lazarus, her brother. The second time is here in today's Gospel reading.

In St. John's Gospel the word has the meaning of tears streaming down one's face. The word used here in St. Luke's Gospel has the meaning of openly sobbing. What that means is that our Lord was not just shedding a tear over Jerusalem as He approached and reflected upon her coming doom. He was openly sobbing. This is quite the contrast to St. Matthew's Gospel account of these events.

But what does this show us? It shows us the compassion of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. He is not rooting for the destruction of Israel. He is sorry for it to happen. It so affects Him that He openly weeps over this lost city. St. Luke even records the words of our Lord that reveal why He is weeping so: because they refused to know the things that would bring them peace with the Lord God. The city of Jerusalem, and the Israelite nation, refused to hear the Word of God; they refused their Messiah; they refused the Lord + Jesus. The crowds were shouting in jubilation the songs of victory, but their victory cries were misplaced, for they thought the Lord + Jesus was coming to be an earthly king that would save them from the Romans. There were still others, specifically the ones listed at the end of today's pericope—the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people—who flat out rejected Him. They rejected Him out of jealousy and hatred. So, they sought to destroy Him. And they would find a way in a few days when Judas Iscariot agreed for thirty pieces of silver to betray Him to them.

We even see an example of how they have not only rejected their Messiah, but have rejected the Lord God and His worship when our Lord + Jesus enters into the temple and sees them buying and selling; turning the house of prayer into a den of thieves. They made the house of God—the house which was to be for prayer to God that He might forgive people their sins and show mercy into a marketplace; a place for buying and selling. The perfidious Jews turned the place of God's free grace and mercy into a place where grace and mercy was bought and sold. If you paid the right price, you would get the forgiveness that you desired. This was not what God had intended when He gave them the animal sacrifices. The sacrifices were meant to provide a means of atonement for those who had sinned against God, and were meant as a foreshadowing of the once and for all time sacrifice of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ on the tree of the holy cross.

It was things like this that showed that they had rejected the Word of God. And it should be pointed out that this cleansing of the temple is the second time that our Lord + Jesus drove out the ones buying and selling in the temple. He also drove them out at the beginning of His ministry at His first Passover in Jerusalem after He began His ministry as the Messiah of mankind. This means that just three years later they had gone back to doing the same evil that they were doing before.

We see this in our society as well. Something terrible happens that drives men to repentance and brings them into the Church, only for them to return to their evil ways shortly after, as soon as the sting of the event has faded away. In fact, people become even more brazenly evil and unrepentant.

This is how it was with the Israelites. They had the Messiah. They had the Christ of God. They had His holy Word. They had all of these good gifts from the Lord God given to them for their benefit and good, and they wasted them. In many ways today's Gospel reading is a reflection of last Sunday's Gospel reading where the unjust steward wasted the possessions of his master. In that parable we see an individual's wasteful stewardship. In today's Gospel we see an entire nation's wasted stewardship. This should stand as a sharp warning to us, the Church. The people of Israel were the people of God, they were supposed to be the Church on Earth. But they squandered and wasted the Word of God for fame, glory and self-righteousness. The Church was supposed to be a place of mercy and forgiveness, not a place of buying and selling; of making money off of people's sinfulness.

The Church is supposed to be a house of prayer. A place where we can come and receive healing balm for our many transgressions as we hear again and again of our Lord's sacrifice for us on the tree of the holy cross. We place our faith in that sacrifice, and on account of our faith we are credited

with forgiveness, life and salvation. These gifts are given to us in such simple means. Just by hearing the preaching of the Gospel and believing what is preached brings us forgiveness. Not because our believing is some work of ours, but because our believing places its trust in what our Lord + Jesus has done for us. Our faith looks not inside of ourselves, but always looks outward to the promises of our Lord found in His once and for all sacrifice on the tree of the holy cross. This is why the Holy Ghost uses Preaching, and Holy Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and Confession and Absolution, and the Conversation and Consolation of the Brethren to create such a faith in us so that we do not look at our sins and our promised destruction because of them, but it looks to the cross where our deserved destruction was meted out upon our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

We come to this house of prayer to receive these gifts once more fresh and new. So that the burdens of our sins may be lifted off of our shoulders and placed upon our Lord's shoulders. The Holy Ghost uses the whip of the Law to drive out of us hope and desire to save ourselves from our sinfulness. The Holy Ghost uses the whip of the Law to drive us to the cross—to the means of grace wherein we meet and participate in the cross of our Lord + Jesus.

It is here in this house of prayer that our Lord meets us with His Word. This Gospel reading really has three parts to it. The first was our Lord's weeping over the state of the Church of His day. There is much in today's Church that drives us to weeping, as well. So, sin and evil are just as rampant today, as they were in our Lord's day. The second part of today's Gospel is when our Lord drove out those buying and selling, an example of corruption in the Church, and how the Church squanders the good gifts that our Lord God has given her. But, the third part of today's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke is that even amidst the hatred and desire to destroy our Lord + Jesus by the chief priests, scribes and leaders of the people, there are still many who cling to every Word that our Lord + Jesus preaches. "They were very attentive to hear Him."

My dear Friends, our Lord + Jesus loves you and desires to show you mercy. We see today how much He weeps over the condition of His people—over His Church. He desires that we hear Him; that we repent from our sins and turn to Him and the grace and mercy found only in Him. He has given us a house of prayer; a place where we can come and find refreshment for our souls. Here, in this place, we are given the means of grace whenever we come and attend upon them. The Holy Ghost is here in this place ready to cleanse you and make your soul a place of prayer; a place where you daily turn to the Lord God and cling to Him and receive mercy from Him, so that you may be saved from the promised destruction that you inherited on account of your manifold transgressions. Cling diligently to the Word of God and the promises that are found in it, and you will have the reward that our Lord + Jesus died for on the tree of the holy cross—the forgiveness of your sins. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Merciful God, Heavenly Father, we heartily beseech Thee, Thou wouldst so govern us by Thy Holy Spirit that we may not neglect the time of Thy gracious visitation, nor by impenitence fall into temporal and eternal punishment, but in this our day lay hold on the things that make for salvation and everlasting peace; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth, and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!