

Sermon for August 13, 2023

Luke 19:41- 48

An account from: **The Siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD** by **Josephus**

“Throughout the city people were dying of hunger in large numbers, and enduring unspeakable sufferings. In every house the merest hint of food sparked violence, and close relatives fell to blows, snatching from one another the pitiful supports of life. No respect was paid even to the dying; the ruffians (anti-Roman zealots) searched them, in case they were concealing food somewhere in their clothes, or just pretending to be near death. Gaping with hunger, like mad dogs, lawless gangs went staggering and reeling through the streets, battering upon the doors like drunkards, and so bewildered that they broke into the same house two or three times in an hour. Need drove the starving to gnaw at anything. Refuse which even the animals would reject was collected and turned into food. In the end they were eating belts and shoes, and the leather stripped off their shields. Tufts of withered grass were devoured and sold in little bundles for four drachmas.”

From Matthew 24:21, Jesus says - *“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.”*

You see, they had killed the prophets. They had rejected the Messiah. They despised the way of salvation. Judgment would come. Jesus called this event – the destruction of Jerusalem - the most severe judgment by God in the history of man. Israel, the apple of God's eye, His chosen people, had turned their back on God and God had judged them guilty of unbelief and idolatry. This judgment was greater than that on Sodom and Gomorrah. The siege on Jerusalem that climaxed with the destruction of the temple was the most severe judgment in history.

Our gospel text occurs during that first Holy Week in Jerusalem. Jesus prophesied the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. As He did so, He showed his humanity, Jesus wept. He loved the beautiful city of Jerusalem. He loved the temple. Israel was God's promised land to His chosen people Israel. But, the city and the temple would be destroyed in a terrible siege by the Romans in 70 AD - a siege by Rome that was actually the judgment of God. The temple would never be rebuilt again. To this day it has not and won't be – rebuilt. The crucified and resurrected and glorified body of Jesus now serves as God's temple. We worship Jesus as true God and true man - as the place where God dwells on earth with His people – not a particular country or race of people. No temple is needed. The body of Jesus is where God meets man.

As that first Holy Week began, this prophecy of destruction gave the authorities another good reason to desire Jesus' death. But the authorities were – at this point – not able to take action against Jesus because the people followed him. The people were very much taken with Him and His teaching. They hung on His every word. The authorities were afraid to kill Jesus because they were afraid the Jews would riot and rebel.

Note that we are given the account of Jesus' first cleansing of the temple in John chapter 2. But in our text today we are given the account of Jesus' second cleansing of the temple. He loved his Father's house. It was supposed to be a house of prayer, but it had become a den of thieves. He cleansed the temple by running the money-changers out of the temple. By chasing the money-changers and sellers out of the temple, Jesus cleansed the temple of outright sin against the will of God. God desired that His House be a house of prayer. Jesus prepared it to become what it was intended to be by casting out those who had turned it into a den of thieves, robbing the people by selling them – at outrageous prices - sick and substandard animals that they offered for sacrifice. After cleansing the temple, Jesus began teaching in the place that He loved.

“O Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where Your glory dwells.” God had been absent from the temple for a long time. But with Jesus' cleansing and teaching, God's Word was spoken in God's temple. The God en-fleshed One walked and talked and ruled in His temple. The living Word of God was alive again in the temple.

And so the living Word of God is present and alive with us this morning. You have heard that God became the man Jesus Christ so that He could die – otherwise God cannot die. He suffered and died to save us from sin, death, and the devil. You have heard of Jesus' **humanity** – his weeping over the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel – his love for Lazarus and Lazarus' sisters – his love for the rich young ruler. You have heard about Jesus' **divinity** – his ability to perform miracles in nature – his ability to heal the sick – his ability to raise the dead.

This same Jesus tells us this morning (from **Matthew 18:20**) - “For where **two or three** are **gathered** together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

So, we gather in His Name. He is here with us this morning. Though we are few in number - though we have no power in this world – though we have no impressive man-made temple in which to worship as the Jews had in Jerusalem, we know that Jesus is true to His Word and is here with us. He is here with us as the GodMan – the Word of God – the law and gospel – the Holy Scriptures – in the waters in Baptism – present in, with, and under the bread and wine of His Holy Supper both physically and spiritually in a miraculous and mysterious way. He is our temple. And He is here with us as God and man – hiding himself in the bread and wine – he gives Himself to us to forgive our sins, ease our consciences from the effects of sin and guilt, and strengthen our faith.

Dear ones, it is not sin that damns. In a quote from Harold Buls: “It is **unbelief** that damns. Could it happen to us, this unbelief that damns? It could. It comes to many people gradually, like a slow leak of a tire. It's usually not a blow-out, but a slow leak. Satan pulls people away from the Lord very gradually until it is too late.”

Believe in the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all of your mind. Believe in the Lord your God with every cell of your being. The Lord Jesus is true God and true Man. The Lord Jesus is the Son of the only true and living God. The Lord Jesus comes to you this morning as true God and true man, just as He has promised – in the Word – and in the Sacraments – washing your sins away in the waters of Baptism - victorious over death - and hidden in, with, and under the bread and wine. **AMEN.**