

Trinity X, 2006
Text: Luke 19:41-48
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✠Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ ✠

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

Behold Jerusalem, the city over which Jesus weeps in our Gospel lesson for today. Jerusalem – the Holy City. It is the place where God had put his temple – the place where God dwelt in his mysterious presence in the Holy of Holies. God himself had chosen Jerusalem to be the city of his presence. God himself was the protection of Jerusalem. He had given this city every blessing; he had made this city the City of God on earth and blessed her people.

But now in the Gospel lesson behold Jesus weep over this chosen city of God. He weeps because he knows what is going to come upon Jerusalem. Even after all the blessings God had given that city, still she and her inhabitants rejected Jesus. Instead of welcoming the day of her visitation by the Most High God in the flesh, Jerusalem rejected the Lord and delivered him up to be crucified. But still God is merciful – still he allowed a full generation for the city to repent. He sent out his apostles to preach repentance first in Jerusalem. And still the stubborn hard-hearted people rejected the Lord's Messiah.

And so, in accord with the prophecy of Jesus, a generation after his death and resurrection in the year A+D 70 God destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Not one stone was left standing on another. God destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, the former place of his presence, because that city rejected the fullness of God's presence in the flesh of Christ. God did all this, just as Jesus said he would, through the armies of the Roman Empire which surrounded her with barricades: they served as God's executioners in this regard. And God's judgment was frightful. An eye-witness to the destruction, the Jewish general Josephus writes about what he saw: “All hope of escape and all food supplies were now cut off from the Jews, and famine devoured thousands upon thousands. The alleys were choked with bodies, the survivors not having enough strength to bury the dead and even falling into graves with them. No mourning was heard in Jerusalem, for famine stifled all emotions, and an awful silence shrouded the city. . . One refugee, who had been in charge of a single gate, told [the Roman general] that 115,800 corpses had been carried out in an eleven-week period. Other leaders reported that

600,000 bodies of the lower classes had been thrown out, and it was impossible to number the rest.”

And that is why Jesus weeps for Jerusalem: her lack of repentance led to her destruction. So consider her well. Consider her well and repent. For this is no game. This is no mere history lesson. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem for your instruction and your warning. For consider yourself. You, like Jerusalem, are the chosen dwelling place of God. Scripture tells us that Christians are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You, like Jerusalem, have been given every spiritual blessing. So beloved in the Lord, repent! Do not try the patience of God; do not take his mercy for granted. Look at how Jesus weeps for Jerusalem, and look at her ultimate fate of destruction - this city God chose to raise up and bless and nurture for over two thousand years he finally and utterly destroyed because of impenitence.

So do not reject the Lord's Messiah by living lives of unrepentant sin. The Jews of old thought that they could do whatever they wanted, live in whatever kind of sin they wished, because God had chosen and blessed Jerusalem. They said 'Peace, peace' when there was no peace. They said, relax and don't worry God will never turn his back on Jerusalem, he'll let it slide.

But God cannot be mocked. He destroyed Jerusalem because of their rejection of Christ and this horrid destruction was but a faint picture of the hell that awaits those individuals who reject his grace in Christ. So do not think that you can say to yourself, “We have grown up in the church and come from Christian families” do not think membership in this congregation or family ties or pious words will save you if you go on to live a life of unrepentant sin. For Jesus commands his apostles to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins. You can't have the second without the first. Unrepentant sin is a rejection of God's forgiveness and leads to death.

Unrepentant sin is that sort of sin where your conscience tells you what you're doing is wrong and you say, I don't care, I'm going to do it anyway, it's what I want and that's what matters. Do not play that dangerous game with your conscience. To continue in such willful, unrepentant sin will drive faith and the Holy Spirit away. It is the sort of sinfulness that leads to death – it led to Jerusalem's destruction and if you walk that path of deadly sin it will lead to your destruction as well.

So hasten while it is the day of salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord and his Christ. For behold the mercy of God. Though Jesus knows that Jerusalem will reject him, though he knows that they will not leave their sins and turn to him – still he loves and weeps for Jerusalem and goes forth willingly to die for her. Consider that wonderful mercy of God in Christ and consider also yourself. No matter your past rejections of his grace and the struggle with sin in which you have too often surrendered to willful evil, still Christ loves you with an undying love

that led him to death. All your sins and failings and wickedness were laid upon his shoulders; all your sins are washed away in the flow of water and blood flowing from the side of Christ.

Yes now is the day of salvation – for this salvation has been presented to you and is presented to you in the here and now. That water from Christ's side washed you clean in Holy Baptism and you are now fit to stand in the new Holy of Holies – the place where Jesus is truly present in his Body and Blood. This forgiveness is yours. You did not earn it, you cannot repay it: it is the free gift of the God of grace whose almighty power is chiefly manifest in the showing of mercy and taking pity upon fallen humanity.

Treasure this forgiveness of your sins above all things. Nothing is more important than this. For this is no game. This is the realest of real life. And standing on your own, you stand in your sins and will receive a punishment far worse than that which Jerusalem faced in A+D 70. But standing in Christ you are forgiven and free. So when you confront temptation think on these things. Flee temptation and hide in the wounds of Christ. When you struggle with sin, remember that Christ struggled for you on the cross and that this cross is your only salvation.

Cling to Christ – for he is your only hope. He wants life and salvation for you. He offers it to you today in the fruits of the tree of his cross: his Holy Body and Precious Blood given and shed for the forgiveness of all your sins. It is here, in the Body and Blood of Christ that we may call out “Peace, peace” for here in the sacrifice of Christ distributed to us is the Peace of the Lord with us always. Amen.

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

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Now the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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