

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity
21 August, Anno Domini 2022
St. Luke 19:41-48

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

Redeemed of the Lord,

The days are coming and even now they are breathing down our necks. Our enemies are daily encouraged and emboldened by their successes. Those who hate the Gospel are everywhere growing more and more zealous. Around the world those who dare confess the name of Jesus are being hunted, driven out of society, and forced underground. Christ's enemies are filled with blind rage. And the irony is, they are only destroying themselves. By trying to lay siege to the kingdom of God and the order of creation they are only casting themselves into eternal destruction because there is no path to victory for them. They will only consume themselves. There is no amount of anger or violence that will ever be able to overthrow the Church. The Lord sits in the heavens and laughs at their folly.

But none of that should shock us. No one should be surprised when Satan and the unbelieving world that serves him attack God or us who believe in Him. Jesus warned his disciples that the same world that hated Him would treat them no less charitably. Wherever the Word of God is proclaimed, setting sinners free from Satan's rule, there Satan will draw up his forces and wage fierce warfare. No surprise.

That, however, isn't what brought Jesus to weep. He wasn't weeping because the world rejected the Gospel. He wasn't weeping over pagan Rome. He was weeping over the Holy City, the city of David, the city whose very name means "city of peace". Jesus was weeping over the unbelief that was found in the midst of God's own people. He was weeping because no longer was His mercy being preached so that sinners might live in the peace of His forgiveness. Jesus wept because people were languishing under the demonic idea that peace comes from within, from following the Law. The very people who had the Word of God, who had Moses and the Prophets, who had the temple and the sacrifices, God's own chosen people, had turned away from Him. You can hear Christ praying Psalm 51 "For it is not an enemy who taunts me - then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me - then I could hide from him. But it is you, a man,

my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked in the throng." (51:12-14)

Sure they had the Bible. They did very pious looking things and said very pious sounding things. But their hearts were far from God. They were filled with death and unbelief. They had forsaken God's peace - a peace found in repentance and the word of absolution - and instead tried to have peace by bending and twisting the Law of God so that they really didn't need healing any more. They tried to minimize the wounds of their sin so that the only help they needed was a word of encouragement and to be pointed in the right direction. They didn't want to need God. They believed that they were quite capable of saving themselves. Mercy just wasn't satisfying because mercy doesn't glorify the sinner. Instead, they sought the kind of peace that praises the efforts and works of the sinner and demands that God rewards a man's efforts accordingly. They sought the kind of peace that every religion but the true Christian religion offers - a peace that starts with the work of the individual but only ever ends in damnation. They had sold themselves back into slavery and destruction. They foolishly sought peace with God on their own terms, rejecting their Lord on the day of His visitation. And their day came. In only forty short years, Rome would come and raze Jerusalem to the ground and massacre its inhabitants.

Have we, as God's people, learned? Do we look for peace where God gives it? Or do we try to make peace on our own terms? Do we try to buy peace with our works or our money? Do we simply assume that God approves of everything we say and do because we say we are Christians? Have we fallen prey to the temptation to substitute peace with God for peace with the world by blending in and living just as the world lives with a little church on Sunday thrown in for good measure?

Certainly many have. Many continue to try to heal the wounds of sin by teaching that there is no wound, there is no sin. Or that the only sin is to call something sin. Everything a person thinks, says, does, or feels must be validated. And over such false preaching our Messiah, our peace, still weeps because the only thing such lies do is blind people to true peace, the peace that passes all human understanding - Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away our sin and conquers death.

To be sure peace is something most of us are longing for these days. Threats of nuclear war, civil unrest, endless murders and suicides, inflation and unemployment. Everywhere you turn there is poverty and despair. The elderly languish in pain and the young are afflicted with terrible diseases. Families are

being torn apart every day. Marriages suffer. The most vile atrocities and cruelties are lauded as merciful and loving. And we are looking everywhere, anywhere for peace - governments, doctors, drugs, gyms, academic degrees, higher salaries, self-control. But we will never find what we are looking for in any of those things. Just as masking the symptom isn't the same as curing the disease, so also quieting the unrest on the outside doesn't mean there is peace within.

There is only one way to peace, one way to set aside fear and worry and guilt. It is not an ideology or a piece of legislation or medical advancement. It is the person of Jesus Christ, who comes among us in the flesh. It is His holy flesh that has reconciled all of humanity to God by bearing our sin and suffering our death. By bearing God's wrath against our sin, Jesus has taken away any need for us to live in fear of God's judgment. We no longer need to look for a way to appease God and make Him happy with us. There is no work to be done because He has done it. There is no payment to be made because He has paid it.

And He doesn't come to heal lightly because what we need is to be raised from nothing less than the death of sin. There is no need to try to minimize your guilt or hide your sin. Doing so only deceives you and robs you of the great comfort Christ stands before you to give you. In His Word and Holy Sacraments Christ brings with Him true and eternal peace, peace that can't be bought or bargained for. This peace can only be given freely, a gift from God to sinners.

Today, this day, is the day of God's gracious visitation to you, O Jerusalem. This day Christ would gather you and hide you under the shadow of His wings of mercy and compassion. This day Christ would bind up not just your scratches but the deep lacerations of your sin, your sorrow, your anguish, and your fear. And all your enemies will flee before Him. Though you may feel hemmed in on every side, hopelessly surrounded by doubt and distress and a world driven mad you do not need to fear. They are powerless. They surrounded your Lord as well. They howled and jeered at Him. They beat Him and crucified Him. But they could not overcome Him. Death had no power over Him and He rose, triumphant over sin, death, and hell. Now your Champion comes to you to share with you the spoils of war. He pours out water and Blood to wash you and feed you - to proclaim not only in your hearing but in the hearing of your foes - "I have laid claim to this one. I have fought and died for this one. I will guard and keep these, my beloved children, until the day when I return in glory and bring them to their eternal home."

The peace of the Lord be with you always - the forgiveness of all your sins and the assurance of God's forgiveness and love.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understand guards your hearts and your minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.