

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity
4 August, Anno Domini 2024
St. Luke 19:41-48

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

Cleansed of the Lord,

In the past we have focused our attention in this reading on our Lord's weeping over Jerusalem. Today I would like to turn our attention to the second half of the pericope where our Lord enters the temple and overturns the tables of the money changers. This event in our Lord's ministry teaches us a great deal about the nature of our Lord's work and our lives as the redeemed.

In righteous anger Jesus drove out the false teachers and sellers of righteousness. He hated that His Father's house, which God had established as the place of His saving presence - the place where sinners could go and call upon the Name of the Lord for salvation and help in every time of need - had been turned into a den of robbers. And what is a robber's den? It is the place where thieves go to hide, where among fellow thieves their wickedness is not threatened.

The Pharisees and Sadducees, the priests and the scribes, sought to use the holy facade of the temple to dress over their wickedness and unbelief, much as God's people had been doing for centuries beforehand - deluding themselves into thinking that their sin and their false belief were acceptable to God because they had the temple and the sacrifices. But they were the worst kinds of robbers, stealing the peace of God from sinners and dressing up their thievery as holiness and godliness.

Our Lord, filled with zealotry for the Name of God and His righteousness and a fervent desire to see all men saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth, drove those knaves out with whips. That which is unholy cannot peacefully coexist with

that which is holy. When Christ, the holy God enters His own house, wickedness and evil MUST depart. “A man cannot serve two masters” we heard Jesus say just last week.

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:19 “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?” The temple of stone was rendered null and void with the death of Christ and reduced to dust by God at the hand of the Romans in AD 70. Jesus teaches that He is the true temple of God, the place of His saving presence for sinners when He says “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” (John 2:19) And now, in a great mystery, God through Holy Baptism, has made us temples of the Holy Spirit.

By the washing of the water with the Word, Christ Jesus drove out from you the spirit of Satan which rules all men born of flesh and blood from the time of their conception. He purged you of the guilt of your sin and so indicated that every day as you open your eyes in this fallen world you are to remember the purifying work of your Baptism. Again and again with the promises of God you are to drown all sin and evil desire in your flesh that seeks to rise up again and rule over you. Earlier in chapter 6 of his letter to the Corinthian Christians, Paul reminded them “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)

To be made a Christian is to be purged and cleansed of what defiled you and made you unholy and unrighteous and detestable in the presence of the holy God. And from what exactly have you been cleansed? You have been cleansed from the spirit of idolatry and anger and covetousness and adultery. You have been purged of the spirit of selfishness and frivolousness and immodesty and lovelessness. You have been cleansed of your love of the things of this world and insatiable hunger for popularity and success and ease and comfort. The spirit of evil which ruled you from the time of your conception, the spirit of sin and self-righteousness, was driven out from you on the day of your Baptism.

But it was not enough that Jesus emptied the court of the Gentiles of the money

changers. An empty temple is no better than a temple filled with robbers. Jesus taught that demons who are driven out will come knocking again. And if what was once emptied is not filled with something else, the last situation of that person will be worse than the first. (Luke 11:24-26)

After driving out the money changers, St. Luke tells us that Jesus was then busy teaching in the temple daily. Rather than allowing the temple to be filled with more and other merchants of false salvation, Christ Jesus filled the temple with the true and saving Word of God - Himself and every Word that proceeded from His mouth. He proclaimed the kingdom of God which had come and through which sinners could receive the forgiveness of their sins through His own Blood which would be shed on the cross. This is to be true of every place which claims to be a Christian church and it is to be true of every person who claims to be a Christian. They are to filled with the Word and the gifts of God.

That means you. It is not enough to simple be cleansed of evil and idolatry. You must be filled with what is good and true. You must actively fill yourself with the Word of God by reading, studying, learning, and even memorizing the Bible every day. You must, as St. Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16) You must set aside time each day to pray - to call upon God for your needs and the needs of your neighbor, your church, and your community; to thank and praise Him for His goodness and mercy and steadfast love; to ask for forgiveness and the strength to fight temptation. You must set aside time each and every day to have devotions with your family, to relax with them and have fun with them, to sit with them in God’s house each Lord’s Day and together be filled with His Word and the Holy Sacraments. You must love and forgive those who sin against you. You must set for yourself and your family new priorities and not let the world tell you what is good and necessary. And your flesh will hate all of it. It will fight and make excuses why you can’t. Drown it again in Baptism.

It is not only worthless but also extremely dangerous, when having been cleansed by God, we then turn around and fill it again with the very things from which we have been cleansed. Do not fill your eyes and ears with the murderous, adulterous, perverted, and sinister filth that the unbelieving world is purposefully filling your televisions and computers with. Turn them off. You aren't gaining anything from them. It's not actual rest. And as the children of God we should never call that fun or entertainment. Turn the TV and the video games and the social media off and go serve your neighbor who is suffering - visit the sick, write a card to those who are shut in, help clean your church. Neither should our jobs or our play rule over us so that they keep us from the things of God. If work or sports or family time or anything else keeps us away from church or keeps us so busy that we don't have time to pray, then we have become a den of robbers and we are using the righteousness of Christ as a cloak for unrighteousness. If we say we can't support the preaching of the Gospel but we can be sure we have the biggest cable TV package and all the streaming services and new fishing or hunting gear and are working on our third vacation of the year, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. The Holy Spirit has departed from us and the evil spirits have taken up residency once again and will not easily let go of the territory they have gained in your heart.

Beloved Baptized of God our heavenly Father, you have been made temples of the Holy Spirit. The Blood of Christ has driven out sin and death from you. Be filled now with the things of life and salvation which He has prepared for you. Fill your ears every day with the Bible and the rich comforting hymns of the faith which proclaim Christ and His Word. Come to your Father's house which is filled with God's life-giving Word and where the feast of salvation is prepared for you every Lord's Day. Come to Individual Confession and Absolution that your Lord may fill your ears and heart with His forgiveness. And be equally diligent to actively put away from yourselves and your children all that is evil and that pervert the truth of God. As Jesus showed us in the temple the evil must be discarded and in its place the Word of God must fill the space. In doing so, you will be richly blessed. You will free yourself from the concerns of this world and the fear of losing your stuff. You will be less anxious and depressed and overwhelmed. Instead, you will be

filled more and more with the peace and joy of Christ while the evil of the world will trouble you less and less. You will prepare yourself and your children to die the blessed death of faith and be received into everlasting joy of God's full and perfect presence.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.