

Rev. Danny Mackey  
Tenth Sunday after Trinity  
August 21, 2022  
Luke 19:41–48  
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Muncie, Ind.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

*“For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

Jerusalem. The City of Peace. God’s holy city. Jesus had entered through its gates just hours before. And He weeps over it. “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” Jerusalem. The city of God. Even the name means “City of Peace.” The capital city of God’s people on earth. The city of His beloved. The people He chose through whom the Messiah came.

But something had happened. Their day was upon them. God visited them in the person of Jesus Christ. Their God and Lord entered the city to cries of “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” Our Lord Jesus entered Jerusalem, but the people did not receive Him. God’s people rejected Him, the Messiah. And so Jesus speaks a terrible judgment against them. As St. John wrote years later, “He came to His own, but they did not know Him.”

Just 40 years after Jesus made His prophecy, Roman Emperor Titus came down from the north and laid waste to Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The people endured a horrible siege. Many thousands were killed. The Jews were scattered to the winds. All because, as Jesus said, they did not know the day of their visitation. The destruction of Jerusalem stands as a sign for the fate of all who reject God’s Christ. Still, to this day, though Jerusalem has been rebuilt, it remains a city in conflict. Not since its destruction has Jerusalem known peace. The City of Peace knows no peace. Nor will it ever, not until the End of Days.

It's hard for us to hear. God’s mercy lasts only a time. Whether that be God’s mercy for a people, for a country, or for individuals. For individuals, the moment of death marks the end of God’s mercy. First death, says the author of Hebrews, and then the judgment.

We can see this pattern throughout history. God affixed a time for the Flood, giving Noah 120 years to build the Ark. Israel’s judgment came with Jerusalem’s destruction. In both cases, the people of God—Noah and his family, as well as those Jewish-Christians who

fled Jerusalem before the Romans came—were still spared. They heard God’s Word—God’s command to Noah and Jesus’ prophecy—and responded accordingly. They believed. And their belief led to action.

This pattern of God’s mercy being extended only so long continued. Many years ago, the center of the Christian world was in Alexandria in Egypt. North Africa, including the city of Carthage, was the center of the Christian world. But today, it’s illegal to even be a Christian in most of the region. Or think of Germany, where many of our ancestors came from. There was a time when you could hardly throw a rock without hitting a Lutheran Church in Germany. The Gospel had free reign throughout so much of the land, thanks to our Lord’s mercy in the Reformation. Well, today many of those churches still exist, but they sit empty. Churches that could seat hundreds or even thousands have five, 10, or 30 people sitting in the pews. And the message they hear is weak, and hardly has any Gospel in it at all. We find ourselves in the unique circumstance where we should be sending missionaries back to Germany and the rest of Europe, to convert the lands of our ancestors.

But we shouldn’t be too hasty in feeling good about ourselves. I wonder sometimes if our land isn’t far behind. Many present a veneer of Christianity. Surveys say that most of the people would still call themselves Christians, but going to church doesn’t matter a whole lot. It’s kind of like saying, “I love my wife, I just don’t want to see her or talk to her anymore.” You can’t do it. This is what the Jews rejected so many years ago. God’s visitation was upon them, yet they rejected Jesus and crucified Him.

When we place other things in our lives before Christ and the Gospel, we are rejecting God’s visitation by His Word and Sacraments. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, because it missed the opportunity for salvation. Do you remember another time when Jesus wept? the death of His dear friend Lazarus. Jesus weeps because His people were dead—spiritually dead. They were dead because they rejected God’s Son. He who rejects the Son, rejects the One who sent Him. They rejected God and so the things that make for peace were hidden from their eyes.

This is also why Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the Temple. They had turned God’s house of prayer into a marketplace for bartering and making deals. They had forgotten that God’s house isn’t about making money; it’s about forgiveness of sins through

the blood of the Messiah. They had forgotten the things that make for peace. So Jesus drove out the moneychangers and made room for His Word.

So what are the things that make for peace?

Clearly Jesus is talking about Himself first of all. Apart from Christ, there is no peace. His sacrificial death and resurrection alone can give us true peace. And how does He give you true peace? Through repentance and faith. We need to acknowledge our sin and seek forgiveness. That forgiveness is distributed through His Word and Holy Sacraments. God continues to visit us today. He is longsuffering and patient. Yes, we're warned that His mercy will end and then the judgment. Yet, His longsuffering is just that: long. That's no reason to delay our repentance. No reason to delay seeking His forgiveness. And know that as long as we have breath, His mercy still extends to us. God doesn't simply give up on His people. So He visits us with His Word and gives us His very body and blood. Truly, God visits with His people.

What did Jesus do after He cleaned out the Temple? He taught daily in the temple, in God's house. Once He had cleared out the thieves with the whip of the Law, He then filled the temple with His very presence and teaching.

In our Collect of the Day, we thanked God that He declares His almighty power above all in showing mercy and pity. Where was the mercy and pity in our text? Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, and then goes and dies for His wayward people. As Jesus declared a few days earlier to His disciples, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written of the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; they will scourge Him and kill Him and on the third day He will rise." He clears the temple and makes room for His presence and teaching. He clears the temple to prepare for His sacrifice for not only a wayward nation but for all nations. He cleared the temple to make ready for His sacrifice on the cross.

God works today through simple Law and Gospel, through repentance and forgiveness. Our Lord cleans out our hearts and makes way for His message of forgiveness and reconciliation. And this message must be heard again and again and again. We are slow of heart. We easily forget. This is why we pray that our Lord would open our hearts to the

hearing of His Word. This is why we pray in the Liturgy, “Lord, have mercy! Don’t give us what we deserve! Give to us out of your bountiful goodness!” And He does.

It's true that God’s mercy lasts for a time. The time of His mercy is now. Today He visits us. Repent, and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Because He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He gives us the faith to declare that Jesus Christ is Lord. That can only come from the power of His Holy Spirit given in His Word. He offers us a heavenly Jerusalem, the true city of peace, which knows no end.

In Jesus’ name.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ + Jesus.