

Luke 19:41–48  
10th Sun. after Trinity  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
August 13, 2023

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

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

Today, on the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, the Church commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Our Gospel text at the end of Luke chapter 19 points to the devastation to come just one generation after our Lord's death and resurrection. Once again, the people of Israel had rejected the commands and the promises of God. They went their own way. And when our Lord is rejected, there are profound consequences. When Jesus weeps over Jerusalem, He's not just making a prediction about what will happen in the near future. He's also warning people at all times and places about the consequences of rejecting the LORD. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD (Ps 33:12), but cursed are the nations that forget God (Ps 9:17), the nations that turn to other gods. Those blessings and curses are not abstractions, but real, and we see repeatedly how those blessings and curses are carried out throughout history. The judgments of God are an example, written down for your instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. They are a warning for those of you who stand to take heed lest you fall. And at the same time, Jesus offers hope for those who find themselves in the midst of collapse and chaos.

A standard reading on this day, Trinity X, has always been the Jewish author, Josephus's, firsthand account of the mayhem when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. If you page through the back of most older German Lutheran hymnals, you'll find this account as it was to be read in the Vespers service. Josephus describes what Jerusalem was like on the inside as it was being besieged. The people were starving, to the point that family members would steal food

from each other. Some were eating the leather from shoes or shields. Many corpses were found after the siege with grass and even dung in their mouths. They had begun to live like animals just to survive.

In one case, soldiers came to a home in search of food. The woman inside offered leftovers of her infant child, whom she had slaughtered, cooked, and eaten. The warning of Deuteronomy 28 had come true: “They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you. And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you” (Deut 28:52–53). We can’t even begin to imagine the despair that would lead a mother to eat her infant child.

So why all this death and destruction? What’s the point? What’s ever the point? Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because He knows what will soon take place. He says to the holy city: “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 peace, did not recognize the prince of peace when He came to them in humility. Jesus longed to gather the children of Israel as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but they would not (Luke 13:34). And so their house would be left desolate. The people of Israel didn’t understand the things that make for peace. They didn’t understand that our LORD Jesus Christ entered the city as a pure and innocent victim, to die for the sins of the world and to rise again to give His flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51). They didn’t understand what makes for peace, and so they were left with chaos.

In the man Christ Jesus, God is united with our flesh and blood, and He was reconciling Himself to all things, whether on earth or in Heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross (Col 1:20). True and lasting peace comes only in the death and resurrection of Jesus. But this was hidden from the people's eyes. They were under a delusion, entranced with other powers and authorities besides the one true God. They didn't know the time of their visitation, that God had come to them in the flesh to save them. As the priest Zechariah sings in Luke 1: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people" (Luke 1:68). The people were not ready to receive Him. They didn't recognize the hour of visitation. And so their enemies set up a barricade around them, surrounding them on every side. They were torn down to the ground and their children with them. Not one stone was left upon another because the builders rejected the cornerstone, even stumbling over Him.

When we consider the destruction of Jerusalem, it's easy to make three mistakes. The first mistake is to not think much of it. We are so accustomed to sensational stories and images that we become numb to death and destruction. Or we rationalize the event away, thinking that's just the norm in this sinful and fallen world. We don't see the judgment of God behind the events of history the way we ought to see them. Like the scoffers, we can tend to think everything just goes on as usual, continuing as it has since the beginning of creation (2 Pet 3:4). And so we find ourselves calloused and cold in the face of God's judgment. But the judgment still comes.

The second mistake people make in considering God's judgment is to become prideful, saying: "Well, they had it coming. So it goes with those who reject God and turn elsewhere. The people of Israel had enough warning in the Old Testament, they had plenty of examples of what to do and what not to do, and yet they turned away from the LORD. At least we're not like them." The Apostle Paul says that the judgments against Israel in the Old Testament happened as

an example, written down for our instruction (1 Cor 10:11–12). It's easy to think we're doing just fine when we compare ourselves to those suffering under the judgment of God. But we forget that we might very well be next.

The third mistake that's so easy to make when we consider the destruction of Jerusalem is to despair when we realize that if even Israel, God's chosen people, could fall away and be punished so horribly, what are the chances that we will stay in God's grace and favor? What are the chances that we, too, after tasting and seeing that the LORD is good, will eventually grow bored with Him and turn elsewhere? As Jesus asks: "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). This is a sobering wake-up call to all Christians!

In 1525, Martin Luther preached a sermon on the 10th Sunday after Trinity, later published under the title: "A sermon on the Destruction of Jerusalem. In like manner will Germany also be destroyed, if she will not recognize the time of her visitation." In applying the text to Reformation-era Germany, Luther says: "God has now also visited us, and has opened the precious treasures of His holy Gospel unto us, by which we can learn God's will, and see how we were held by the power of the devil. . . but when we once let the opportunity slip, He will take His Word from us, and then the wrath which consumed the Jews will also consume us . . . I fear the time will yet come when Germany will lay in a heap of ruins." Of course, Luther was right about the impending destruction following shortly on the rejection of God's Word. It's happened multiple times throughout German history, and everytime the dwindling Christian Church recognizes the judgment of God in what is taking place.

And what Luther said of Germany applies to any land and any people that has God's Word but begins to reject it. I fear the time will yet come when the United States will lay in a heap of ruins. I fear the time will yet come when the entire western world will lay in a heap of

ruins. I fear the time will yet come when the LCMS, when KELC, and when all our households will lay in a heap of ruins. If we have the Word of God, yet treat it like a museum piece, instead of like the living and active Word that it is, then we are building on another foundation and the entire house will crumble. And great will be the fall of it! Take heed, dear Christians. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts by the deceitfulness of sin and unbelief (Heb 3:7–8, 19).

The people of Israel did not know the things that make for peace, the death and resurrection of Jesus. They didn't know the time of their visitation, that the LORD Himself came to them in flesh and blood to redeem them from their sins. Jesus is the true Temple made without hands. He is the Temple where God meets man, the true Temple that the earthly temple in Jerusalem only pointed to. As Jesus said "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And He was speaking about the Temple of His body (John 2:19,21).

The body of Jesus is the true Temple because the Word of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands. The Most High God dwells in the body of Jesus. There, in the flesh of Christ, the sins of the world are atoned for. God no longer counts our sins against us because they were paid for in the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. The Great High Priest has completely covered our sins. And so the old temple, the picture, could pass away because in Jesus we have the reality of God's presence with His people. In the blood of Jesus we have the reality of atonement and access to God the Father. The old has passed away. The new has come.

Notice what comes at the end of our Gospel reading. Jesus predicted the destruction of the Temple, the destruction of Jerusalem and the judgment upon Israel according to the flesh. And yet Jesus still enters that very temple in that very city, teaching the people daily. And all the

people were hanging onto His words. Jesus offers hope for those who find themselves in the midst of collapse and chaos. He offers hope in His body given for you and in His blood shed for you, which preserve you from God's wrath. Even when everything around you collapses and the world goes up in flames, in Jesus Christ you will overcome and win the victory. The Temple of Jesus's body was destroyed when He was nailed to the cross, but after three days He took it up again in His resurrection. And where Jesus is, there you will be also, in His death, in His resurrection, and in the new, eternal Jerusalem He has prepared for you. Then it will be proclaimed for all to hear: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:3). In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. We stand for the Offertory.