

271. Luke 19:41–48  
Trinity X  
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.  
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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,

If you've ever visited Rome and walked the *via sacra*, the sacred street, you may have seen the arch of Titus just around the corner from the Colosseum. And if you've not seen the arch, you may have seen a similar arch in Paris, the Arc de Triomphe, which was modeled after the arch of Titus. The arch of Titus was built by Emperor Domitian around AD 81 to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem about a decade prior, in AD 70. That's when Domitian's father, Emperor Vespasian, and older brother, Titus, squashed the Jewish rebellion. Upon the arch, there's a depiction of Roman soldiers looting the Temple and carrying off the distinctive candlesticks, silver trumpets, and the table of shewbread. The events pictured in a victorious way on the arch of Titus are described in graphic detail by Josephus, whose account of the destruction of Jerusalem is traditionally read at the vespers service for today, the tenth Sunday after Trinity. The arch of Titus shows the victory. But Josephus describes the defeat, including the cannibalism to which the desperate people of Jerusalem turned.

The destruction of Jerusalem is one of those many places where secular history intertwines with salvation history. As we see in our Gospel Lesson this morning, our LORD Jesus Christ Himself wept over Jerusalem, knowing that soon the city and its Temple would be horrifically destroyed. He knew well what would take place in the next generation, that Titus would surround Jerusalem with his armies and tear her down to the ground, not leaving one stone upon another. Jesus knew every detail of what would soon take place, so He wept over Jerusalem

and the Temple, saying “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.”

Our LORD was on His way to the Holy City to lay down His life for the people. Jesus traveled the *via sacra*, the holy way, to His goal at Calvary, where He would make peace by the blood of His cross. He taught the people along the way, but so many closed their eyes and stopped up their ears. They didn’t want to hear the message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. They didn’t want to hear the message of peace between God and man. They preferred to make peace in their own way. And so the destruction would most certainly come; not right away, but soon. God visited His people to redeem them. But with rejection of God’s Word comes destruction.

Later in the Gospel of Luke, in chapter 21, Jesus says that the destruction of Jerusalem would be a sign that the end of the world is coming. Every end is a sign of the final end. When people spoke of the Temple’s beauty, Jesus responded: “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down . . . Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” This was fulfilled when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. Soon after that sign, Jesus says “they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” For 2,000 years these things have been taking place. Our redemption is most certainly drawing near. Indeed, He’s at the very gates (Matt 24:33).

From the destruction of Jerusalem we learn that the greatest sin is when God’s people don’t recognize the time of their visitation. In His mercy, our LORD is patient. He gives ample time and opportunity for repentance. But when the longsuffering of God comes to an end, the

vengeance is fierce. Jesus is warning all those who have God's Word lest they despise and reject it. God set apart His people of the Old Testament and gave them a holy city and a holy temple where He would meet with them. Our Lord must have felt about Jerusalem the way anyone feels about his hometown and his homeland. There's a patriotism Jesus has that makes Him weep when He sees His own people going the wrong way. God warns His wayward children, but at a certain point He hands them over to destruction.

And if the LORD could destroy the temple and the city and the people He loved so dearly, how is the rest of the world to fare? How much less will He spare other cities, other lands, and other people! When the Word of God and the servants of God enter a place, the LORD makes those people His own. He calls them through His Word and dwells in their midst. But when people who have God's Word reject it, then the last state has become worse for them than the first: "For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2 Pet 2:21). When the Word of God is rejected and God's people fall away from the faith, judgment will most certainly come. Scoffers say: "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Pet 3:4). The LORD is not being slow. He's being patient, "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." And then the day of the LORD will come like a thief in the night. Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

What the people of Jerusalem didn't realize was that Jesus is Himself the true Temple, the Temple to which all previous temples pointed. From the Tabernacle to Solomon's Temple, to Zerubbabel's Temple, to Herod's Temple, the Temple in Jerusalem was always a picture of the true Temple, our LORD Jesus Christ. He is the Word made flesh, the God who tabernacled

among us. Jesus said: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. He was speaking about the temple of His body.” In the Old Testament, God dwelt with His people in the Tabernacle and Temple. Those are the places God came to visit His people. Yet the LORD can and does make His glory depart from earthly temples made with hands.

What so many people still today don't realize is that in the New Testament, God dwells with His people in the Body of Jesus Christ, even unto the end of the age. The Temple of Jesus's Body was destroyed, nailed to the cross, and killed. But after three days it was perfectly rebuilt when Jesus rose from the dead, never to die again. The picture of the true Temple could fade away because the ultimate reality of Jesus, who is the Temple, was here to stay and will stay forever. Jesus ascended into Heaven that He might fill all things. Then He sent the Holy Spirit upon His church as He continues sending the Holy Spirit, to call, gather, and enlighten a people for God in the Body of Jesus Christ, the Church. He does this in the preaching of God's Word and in Baptism. Jesus then feeds us with His Body, knitting us together as one Body, the Church. He is the head, and we are individually members of Him, members of His Body.

The Body of Christ is the true Temple, and in Him, your body is also a Temple, a Temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells within you. In the Book of Revelation [3:12], Jesus says to the church of Philadelphia, and through that congregation to all Christians: “The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.” In Jesus Christ you are more than conquerors (Rom 8:37), and so God makes you a pillar in His Temple.

You are living pillars in the house of God because you are members of the Body of Christ, the true Temple of God, where the LORD dwells with His people and they with Him

forever. In Baptism, He puts His name upon you. He marks you as His own, as a pillar in the Temple of the living God. Come what may, “neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38–39), because this Temple, the Body of Christ, cannot be destroyed.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple serve as a warning to all people not to ignore the patience of God. “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). The LORD has visited and redeemed us in Jesus Christ. The LORD has made us His people in Jesus Christ. He leads us on the holy path—the via sacra—back to God, for He Himself is the way and in His flesh and blood you are at peace with both God and man. May the Holy Spirit continue to dwell in you as His Temple, as you await that day when all history will come to an end, when you will put on immortality and behold the Lord in the eternal city—the New Jerusalem, the Holy City coming down out of Heaven from God (Rev 21:10). 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.