

IN PEACE LET US PRAY TO THE LORD  
Luke 19:41-46; Trinity 10; August 7-8, 2021

Our Gospel Reading for today from Luke 19 immediately follows the account of Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Entering as a conquering king, though humbly riding on a donkey, Jesus was about to be enthroned on the cross as the Savior of the world. But not all was well in Jerusalem. Many in the crowd cheered Jesus' entrance and hailed Him as their king, but there were also those who would not accept Jesus as their king. They had already hatched a plot to get rid of Him and were just looking for the opportunity to set it in motion.

This tension between those who receive Jesus in faith and those who do not continues to this day. There is the obvious conflict between those who outright reject Jesus as their Savior, those who deny Jesus is true God and true man, whatever belief they hold, if they have any belief in a god at all, and the one Church that confesses the Holy Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ, God's Son, as the only Way of salvation. But there is a more subtle conflict between the true faith and those who claim membership in the Church yet actually reject Jesus and His saving work as necessary for salvation. It is this more subtle rejection of Him that Jesus mostly addresses in today's Gospel Reading.

Luke tells us what Jesus was thinking and feeling as He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. **And when He drew near and saw the city, He wept over it, 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."** Why would Jesus weep over the city of Jerusalem? Because He knew that most of the people in it would reject Him as their Savior while still claiming to be the people of God. Jesus went on to describe the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans about 40 years later in AD 70 after a Jewish rebellion. The leaders of that rebellion claimed to be reestablishing the kingdom of God with the temple in Jerusalem as the place where God was dwelling with His people. In order to do this, they had to reject Jesus as God's Messiah. But the Romans destroyed the city and the temple in it, and to this day many Jews, and some misguided Christians, see the rebuilding of the temple as a sign of God's Messiah coming. But He has already come in Jesus Christ, who is God's eternal temple.

The coming of the Messiah, the Christ of God, is described by Jesus in our text as **“the time of your visitation.”** To reject Him was also a rejection of the peace that Jesus came to bring, **“the things that make for peace,”** as He described them. This **“visitation”** is the coming of God’s Son in the flesh in order to bring us **“peace.”**

Peace is a key word throughout Luke’s Gospel. Zechariah after the birth of his son, John the Baptist, prophesied in his *Benedictus* the Savior’s coming as the **way of peace** (1:79). When Jesus was born the angels announced to the shepherds, **“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace good will toward men”** (2:14). When Jesus was presented at the temple after He was born, Simeon rejoiced and confessed that he could now **“depart in peace”** (2:29). When Jesus healed people, He would send them on their way with the blessing, **“Go in peace”** (7:50; 8:48). When Jesus sent out His disciples to preach and heal in His name, He instructed them to greet the people with, **“Peace to this house”** (10:5). When Jesus entered Jerusalem (the name of the city itself is based on the Hebrew word for “peace,” *shalom*) on Palm Sunday the crowds hailed Him with, **“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”** (19:38). God’s Son came to bring us peace. St. Paul put it another way in Ephesians: **“He Himself is our peace”** (2:14).

In the ancient world, when a king would visit a place and march in with his soldiers, his subjects would line the streets and highways and cry out to their king as he passed by, “Lord, have mercy on us!” In Greek that is, *“Kyrie eleison!”* When an earthly king visited, you never knew whether his visit would bring good or evil, life or death. You hoped that the king came in peace and would shower his favor on you, but you never knew.

When people heard that Jesus was coming near, sometimes they would cry out those same words to Him, *“Kyrie, eleison!”* “Lord, have mercy on me!” Maybe the most famous is the blind beggar Bartimaeus (Mk 10:47), whom Jesus healed as He was on His way through Jericho to Jerusalem to suffer, die on the cross, and rise from the dead. Having received the mercy he needed, Bartimaeus followed Jesus as His disciple.

From its beginning, the Church incorporated the *Kyrie eleison* into the weekly order of service with Communion. In Setting One of the Divine Service we are using today it is an expanded *Kyrie* with the pastor repeatedly bidding the people to call on the Lord Jesus Christ for peace. “In peace let us pray to the Lord... For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord... For the peace of the whole world... let us pray to the Lord.” And each time the congregation responds with, “Lord, have mercy,” *Kyrie eleison*.

We don't cry out for God's peace in Jesus Christ the way the world does to its rulers: not sure whether we will receive good or evil, life or death. No, we cry out like Bartimaeus did: with faith in Jesus that He is gracious and merciful and we will receive peace with God through the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus visits us here in the Divine Service with His forgiving Word of peace, thus also the tradition of the pastor using the apostolic greeting before preaching the Word of Christ, “Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our father...” and concluding the sermon with the apostolic blessing, “The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding...”

Jesus also visits us and brings us peace in the Divine Service in His true body and blood in the Sacrament. After His Words are spoken over the bread and wine consecrating them for use in the Sacrament and promising us that they are now His true body and blood, the pastor lifts up the wafer and chalice and announces, “The peace of the Lord be with you always.” This is the *Pax Domini*, Latin for “the Peace of the Lord.” Bread and wine don't give us God's peace, but Jesus' body and blood certainly do. The proper response to the announcement of “Peace” is to confess our faith that our God visits us to give us peace in the flesh and blood of Jesus by responding with, “Amen,” “Yes,” “Truth,” “Gift received.” And then we sing the first Distribution Hymn, the *Agnus Dei*, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and has mercy on us, who gives us peace with God and each other through His body and blood.

Do you know what the last word is that you will hear spoken to you in this Service? You've probably guessed it: peace. “The Lord look upon you with favor/lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.” Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem because so many in it did not know **the things that make for peace**. We have the things of peace.

In the end, those who don't know the things of peace in Jesus will be like the inhabitants of Jerusalem who rebelled against the Romans, were killed, and their city destroyed. The temple building in Jerusalem could not save them after they rejected God's Savior, Jesus, any more than the temple could save the people from the Babylonians in Jeremiah's day when they refused to repent and worshipped idols.

Jesus alluded to this when He came to the temple and drove out those who were selling animals. He quoted the prophet Isaiah in the days before Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel for false worship. **"My house shall be a house of prayer"** (Is. 56:7). And in the days of Jeremiah, when the Babylonians were threatening the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the people kept sinning without repentance thinking that the temple would save them, but they were also defeated. Jeremiah described the worship at the temple then, words quoted by Jesus to show that the people's hearts had not changed in 600 years: **"You have made it [the temple] a den of robbers"** (Jer. 7:11).

I suppose the parallel today would be people who identify some church building as something that will magically protect them from God's judgment. They don't repent of their sins and won't set foot in it to hear God's Word and to eat and drink Christ's body and blood yet still expect to receive God's peace. Will God's judgment of them be any different than Israel and Judah who refused to repent? In Jeremiah's day, the people proclaimed, **"We are delivered!"** only to go on sinning in the way of the world and the false religions around them. People today claim Jesus as their God yet deny their need to repent of putting their desires first and serving desires as their gods.

"In peace let us pray to the Lord." The only temple that stands forever is the body of Christ, which sin sought to tear down and destroy when Jesus was nailed to the cross. But He rose from the dead to forgive our sin and destroy death itself. So when we cry to our Lord for mercy it is as God's own children who have received His mercy in Jesus Christ. That is why we are, **"hanging on His words"** eager to hear and learn them. We will faithfully follow Jesus in this life as healed Bartimaeus did to the altar of the cross to receive the peace of Jesus' body and blood and then depart from this place with that peace. In peace let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy. Amen.