

8.5.2018 Trinity 10 (Luke 19:41-47)

“The LORD is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him” (Habakkuk 2:20). When we meet for Morning Prayer, the service often begins with that opening sentence, a beautiful verse that serves as a powerful reminder of God’s very real Presence in this church, and the hushed, reverential awe that should fill this place where the Creator of Heaven and Earth is worshipped and adored. The one, true God, whom *“heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain”* (1 Kings 8:27) is here in our midst, and as we consider His infinite perfection and holiness, His sovereign authority and dominion, as creatures before our Creator, *let all the earth keep silence before Him*. The LORD is in his holy temple, and while we meet as a congregation this morning, let us keep that truth in mind, remembering Christ’s own promise, that He said, *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20).

Those are comfortable words, especially when spoken in a historic church where generations of Christians have worshipped for over 150 years. Our Lord’s faithful promise and His continual presence bring peace, but as we consider our Gospel reading this morning, for a moment we set aside the comfortable and gentle images of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. The passage we read today does not bring to mind that silent night in Bethlehem, Jesus calling the little children to come to Him, or an image of the Good Shepherd walking home with a wayward lamb laid gently on His shoulders. This morning we are confronted with a different image, a chaotic and disturbing image of a Man that is determined and strong. The Man is Jesus, and He is striking out with a whip of cords, driving out those who bought and sold in the Temple, pouring out the coins of the money-changers and overturning their tables. Our Gospel lesson this morning describes a day in Jerusalem when the LORD visited His holy temple, and He arrived to find those gathered in His presence did not recognize the truth that God was in their midst.

The passage we read speaks of Jesus drawing near to the magnificent city of Jerusalem, and as He beheld the great capital with all its pride, splendor, and the indescribable glory of the Temple, Jesus wept over it. He cried openly knowing what would happen to these people who would not recognize the

arrival of their long-expected Messiah, the Son of God who had come to save them. Christ came to them humbly and personally with His message of peace, but they despised and rejected Him. As St. John writes, “*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not*” (John 1:10-11). God came to His people and walked among them, just as He promised He would, but they failed to receive their Savior, because their hearts were far from Him.

The people professed their belief in the one, true God. They claimed Him as their Creator and Preserver. They honored Him with their mouths through public worship and constant prayer in the streets and synagogues, and while these outward acts seemed like true devotion, they were not, because the people had no genuine love for God. There was no hushed, reverential awe in His holy temple. They no longer cared about communion with Him in that sacred place. They bought and sold animals for sacrifice, and in doing so, made forgiveness look like something that could be bought and sold. They exchanged money for profit, and in the words of Jesus, turned God’s house of prayer into a “*den of thieves*” (Luke 19:46).

In the outward acts that were taking place in the Temple, we see a reflection of the inward spiritual condition of those who Jesus so forcefully drove out. He expelled them from His house because the religion they practiced was no longer a way for all the earth to keep silence before Him, to worship, to adore, and to commune with the God of Heaven and Earth. Religion had become a tool used to further their own personal agenda. It was a means for them to get what they could from God, instead of a way to offer themselves, their souls and bodies to Him, to enter into a relationship with the one, true God, to know Him, to love Him. The truth is, according to the first and great commandment, the heart is what God requires of us. “*Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart...*” (Matthew 22:37). Our whole heart is the gift that God desires, and that which man constantly tries to keep for himself, by substituting every kind of outward religion for true love and obedience.

When we consider all that we’ve discussed so far, we can certainly say this: hindsight is 20/20. From our perspective, it’s easy to point out everything that the Jews of Jesus’ day missed. Two thousand years after the fact we look

back at what they were experiencing and wonder how they could fail to recognize the truth that God was in their midst. We question their unfaithfulness, we are puzzled by their decision to reject Him, we are sickened by the hypocrisy of their outward religion, and we perceive no genuine love for God in their hearts. Basically, we are quick to point out everything they did wrong, every way that they failed to receive the Son of God who had come to save them, but what about us?

The world around us is not so different than the world that was around them. The buying and the selling, the exchange of money for profit, the way that the demanding reality of everyday life can blind us, just as it blinded them, to the point where we no longer recognize the joy and wonder with which God fills our lives, and we begin to live as though He doesn't matter. Remember, the words of the Gospel were written for us, for our benefit and instruction, and the passage we read today clearly illustrates the importance of taking our faith seriously, for it is only by the grace of God, through faith, that we will receive Jesus Christ, the Son of God who has come to save us.

Through faith, we see what they did not. Through faith, we recognize the truth that the LORD is in His holy temple. Through faith, we reach out toward holy mysteries far beyond our comprehension. Through faith, we partake of this Holy Communion and worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, are filled with His “grace and heavenly benediction, and made one body with Him, that He may dwell in us, and we in Him” (Prayer of dedication). It is only by the grace of God, through faith, that the Christian comes to a knowledge of the truth, that today, through the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the LORD is in His holy temple, and His temple is you. The one, true God, whom “*heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain*” (1 Kings 8:27) is not only here in our midst, we are made one body with Him, He dwells in us, and we in Him, and He promises to be “*with you always, even unto the end of the world*” (Matthew 28:20).

The LORD is in His holy temple this morning, and every morning. He never leaves you, and so, the Christian does not separate Sunday from Monday, or religion from the rest of the week. Our daily life, every thought, every word, every deed, is to be guided by our Lord through the indwelling Spirit of the

one, true God. This intimate union and communion between God and man came at the highest cost, and those who take their faith seriously continually reflect on the price our Savior paid, the Blood He shed, the love He showed on the Cross at Calvary. Two thousand years ago, when the LORD visited His holy temple, those who gathered there did not receive Him, because their hearts were far from Him. May Almighty God prevent us from such error. By His grace may we be led to open our whole heart to Him, to the end that we may live in intimate union and communion with our Lord, rejoice in His goodness, and praise His Holy Name in this life, and in the life to come. To Him, *“the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen”* (Jude 1:25).