

8.4.2024 Trinity 10 (Luke 19:41-47)

Three months ago, my mom passed from this life to the next, and while there are many things I'm sure I will forget about the day of her funeral, one thing that I know I'll never forget is the time our family spent together in prayer just a few minutes before we processed into the chapel for the service. I'll always remember that time we spent together in private prayer because the moment was marked by tears. If I close my eyes, I can still see myself standing in the silence of that room, a silence broken only by a fervent prayer, and the weeping of those who loved her so much.

I share that painful memory with you today in order to set the scene for our Gospel lesson, which begins with this statement: "*When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it*" (Luke 19:41). No doubt we all have memories that cannot be erased because they're marked by tears, but can you imagine that day? The day when it was God in human flesh, who wept as He beheld the great city of Jerusalem, who wept as He contemplated the arrogance and blindness of a people who rejected their Messiah (John 1:11), God who wept as He spoke about the violence, destruction, and loss of human life that would soon fall upon His chosen, beloved people.

Tears are a response that at times cannot be contained when we come face to face with the brokenness of this fallen world, and here in Holy Scripture we're provided with an image of our Lord weeping because all of the atrocities that would soon come to pass did not reflect God's perfect will for His people, or for this great city. Jerusalem was, after all, the city which King David was called by God to capture and make the capital of the nation of Israel. Jerusalem is referred to in Scripture as the "*holy city,*" the "*city of God,*" and Jerusalem itself means "possession of peace." It was David's son, Solomon, who built the Temple there, and directed the priests, with elaborate and solemn ceremonies, to move the sacred Ark of the Covenant to its resting place in the Holy of Holies under the wings of the Cherubim.

It was Jerusalem that Jesus now approached, just days before His own people would condemn Him, the Romans would crucify Him, and the Gospel passage tells us that "*He beheld the city, and 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. 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” (Luke 19:41-44).

Psalm 103 describes God as “*compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love*” (103:8), and here, in the tears our Lord shed for Jerusalem and its people, we see a vivid image of God’s compassionate love. I ask you: Who would weep for the city where their blood would soon be shed? Who, but God, would manifest such compassionate, gracious, and abounding love! While we struggle to pray for our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, God not only prays for them, His broken heart weeps for them, He cries out “*Father, forgive them...*” (Luke 23:34), and sheds His precious blood on the Cross at Calvary.

Jesus wept at the thought of the sorrow and misery that would soon befall the people of God, sorrow and misery that they would confront, because, in His words, “*you did not know the time of your visitation.*” The long history, recorded in the Old Testament, of God dealing so lovingly with this people had now culminated in the gracious act of the Father sending His Son. As the letter written to these people, the Hebrews, states, “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...*” (Hebrews 1:1-2). God sent His Son. Jesus “*came to His own, and His own received Him not*” (John 1:11), yet let us not fool ourselves, this is not merely a historical account written to record these events. This is the “*living and active*” word of God, which is “*sharper than any two-edged sword*” (Hebrews 4:12). This isn’t just history, these words are written for our eternal benefit and instruction. Therefore, as we bring to mind this image of our Lord beholding the *city of God*, and weeping over it, because they didn’t know the time of their visitation, we should ask ourselves: Do we know the time of our visitation?

God continually, and miraculously, reached out to the Hebrew people in compassionate, gracious, loving ways, and all of these efforts built up to the act of the Father sending His Son, and this historical truth should stir our own thoughts, helping us bring to mind those moments when God has visited us,

and dealt with us in the same way. Consider, how often the Lord has visited you and I in His Church through Word and Sacrament, in our home through the love of a parent, a spouse, or sibling, in the world through the beauty of creation, in our daily life through the kindness of a friend or complete stranger, even in times of trial or sorrow the Lord visits us, for how often have “*the sufferings of this present time*” (Romans 8:18) awakened us to the knowledge of His presence, and the gift of His peace which passes all understanding.

God visits His people. He visited the people of Israel at *various times and in various ways*, and finally, through His Son. God visits His people, and just as our Lord approached Jerusalem two thousand years ago, He draws near to us today. Do we know that this is the time of *our* visitation, and if we do, how are we responding to the One who declares, “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*” (Revelation 3:20). Are we reaching out and opening the door upon which the Divine Visitor knocks, or is it possible that our Lord stands just on the other side, weeping as He beholds this city of God?

We must not in any way neglect this time of our visitation. Instead, by the grace of God we must recognize, to use the words of Scripture, that “*...the Kingdom of Heaven is near*” (Matthew 3:2), “*the Lord is at hand*” (Philippians 4:5). We must seek Him “*while He may be found... call upon Him while He is near*” (Isaiah 55:6), because we know from the examples which have been provided for us that those who neglect the time of their visitation, those who turn away from God, are turning away from *every good and perfect gift* (James 1:17) our Father longs to give to His children. To turn away from God is to turn away from such perfect gifts as Absolute Truth, Amazing Grace, Divine Love, and His Mercy that is new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Our most painful memories are often unforgettable, because they’re marked by tears. As we consider the passage we read today, and carefully reflect on the tears of our Lord, may we never forget this moment when God wept, and by His grace may we never be the cause of His tears. Instead, let us be a people who recognize the time of our visitation, a people who receive our

Lord, and respond to His sacrificial love by offering our selves, our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice to Him - a sacrifice of love for God, for our neighbor, for the world He gave His life to save.