

## The Tenth Sunday after Trinity, A<sup>x</sup>D 2010

### Luke 19:41-47

*In the name of the Father and of the <sup>x</sup> Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 Nineteen hundred forty years ago on Tuesday, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed. As the Jewish historian Josephus records it, “During the days of the apostles they were warned never again to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem or to fortify their city. But during the 60's of the first century, while Rome experienced internal troubles, the Jews rebuilt their walls and fortified the city. In the year 66 the Emperor Nero sent Gessius Florus and his legions to subdue the city. The Jews killed him and 5000 of his men. This angered Rome very much. They sent Flavius Vespasianus with his legions to deal with the city. Vespasian and his troops moved on to Jerusalem. But Vespasian was recalled to Rome because he was elected Emperor. Titus, his son, took over as commander of Vespasian's men. At the time of the Passover in the year 70 about 1,000,000 Jews gathered in Jerusalem. During the next five months Jerusalem was totally overcome and destroyed. They destroyed themselves. There were three parties in the city who were jealous of each other and did not trust each other. They destroyed each others' food supplies and homes. Thus the Jews were their own worst enemies. Jerusalem was circled by three strong walls. With great effort and at great expense the Romans conquered wall after wall. Then they went after the Temple. It was burned to the ground August 10, 70 A.D. Then 900,000 Jews were killed, starved or sold as slaves. Only about 100,000 survived” (Buls' summary of Josephus).

2 Approaching Jerusalem, knowing of the impending destruction, Jesus wept. That He wept demonstrates both Jesus' humanity and His divinity. Only man can weep; only God can know with certainty the impending destruction of the city. Jesus is perfectly and completely both: human and divine. He foretells to the detail—“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...they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation”—how Jerusalem will be razed almost 40 years before it happened, and yet it broke His heart. The Israelites were chosen by God, appointed by Him to be the people from whom the Messiah would come, chosen as His possession, to be the people through whom He would reveal His mercy to the nations. And yet they did not know the time of their visitation, the time of the Messiah's arrival, His dwelling with His people. They persisted in sin and unbelief. Knowing the physical destruction that awaited those who through unbelief and impenitence had unelected themselves, and knowing the eternal destruction that awaits those who through impenitence and unbelief depart from the faith, Jesus wept.

3 Similar tears flow for those once-Christians, to whom God has delivered the gift of faith, who through intentional sin, reject that faith. Dr. Luther writes, “When holy people—still having and feeling original sin and daily repenting and striving against it—happen to fall into manifest sins (as David did into adultery, murder, and blasphemy), then faith and the Holy Spirit have left them. The Holy Spirit does not permit sin to have dominion, to gain the upper hand so it can be carried out, but represses and restrains it from doing what it wants. If sin does what it wants, the Holy Spirit and faith are not present. For St. John says, ‘No one born of God makes a practice of sinning...and he cannot keep on sinning’” (SA, III, 3, 43-45). Woe to those who say “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace, who forget how to blush and remain unashamed of sin. “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace.” The Christian life is one of constant struggle and constant growth. If you ever quit struggling against your sins, you have ceased to be a Christian. If you every quit growing in the Word of God, your faith is certainly withered and dead.

4 Love does not coerce a response, nor bind you to it. You are free to leave, free to depart from faith and God. You are free to return to your sins, to your old life, which is really to return to death. But why would you want to? “Why will you die, o house of Israel?” asks the Lord, “As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Ez 33:11). He “desires all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Ti 2:4). So, with a love that suffers itself to be rejected, Jesus wept.

5 And yet, God used the rejection of the children of Israel, their hatred for Jesus and His Word, to bring salvation to all men. The One overlooking Jerusalem before He enters into it is He who was led out of Jerusalem, forced to carry the instrument of His torture and death. He who wept for Jerusalem is He who would cry from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” The reason for Jesus’ tears is that Jerusalem’s destruction is unnecessary. Your destruction is unnecessary. Jesus was destroyed, sacked by the armies of sin, death, and the devil, when He surrendered His life in your place, on the cross. For you, beloved. He lived, He wept, He died, He lives for you.

6 Every sin has been paid for. Sin no longer damns. It is only unbelief that damns. It is true that men can reject their baptisms, but they cannot unbaptize themselves. They may reject faith which is necessary to receive the benefits of Baptism, they may rebel against the One who marked them with His triune name in Baptism, they may incur the loving tears of Jesus the Crucified. But it is also true that proud, stubborn men like Peter and David can be brought back into God’s grace. They can receive His gift of faith anew and live in the water of Baptism once again.

7 The day of your visitation is today. The things that make for peace are here. The gifts of God are as free as they are priceless. You did not earn the love of Jesus that led Him to the cross. You did nothing to merit the faith and forgiveness of sins delivered to you in Holy Baptism. He forgives you in Holy Absolution not because of the accuracy or perfection of your confession but because of the perfection of His absolution. He feeds you with His own Body and Blood in the Supper not because you deserve them but because you need them. To struggle against your sinful flesh, to live the Christian life, is to remain where God fights for you, in His Word and Sacraments. You need only to be still; He who won the war fights for you. To grow in faith, to mature as a Christian, is nothing more than living in the repentance and faith He delivers every day and to remain in His Word. That’s not your work, either. God grows you with His Word. That’s why it’s so vitally important to be hearing His Word, not just every Divine Service, but every Bible Class, as well; not just every Sunday but every day as well.

8 So be fed and kept alive. Eat the Body of Jesus and drink His Blood. These do for you what you cannot do for yourself: keep you a Christian. Receive His Holy Absolution; hear the word He sends pastors to proclaim to you. This does what you cannot do to yourself: forgives your sins. It is Jesus alone who gives peace, who works peace between you and your Creator by shedding His blood. Here, in His service, at His Supper, is peace with God for you. The time of His gracious visitation is today. The things that make for peace are here.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*

Pastor Jeff Hemmer