

“Your Peace: Hanging on His Word”  
Sermon for the 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity  
July 25, 2008  
Luke 19:41-48  
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The things that make for peace are hidden from your eyes.

Does this passage bother you?

Your enemies will tear you down to the ground.

That’s Jerusalem, not us. We’re God’s people. We’re Christians!

Let’s try some different takes on Jesus’s story:

- Terrorist attack
- Earthquake
- Cancer

If our enemies try to tear us, the new Jerusalem, down to the ground then Jesus must be speaking to us.

Luther: “What usually happens, is that we think, Oh, God wouldn’t punish us! Because, in His mercy, God delays His punishment, hoping that we will change our ways, and so the world concludes (we), God won’t ever punish. This is what happened in Jerusalem too. They just kept on sinning against God, doing whatever they pleased. They deliberately ignored the possibility that God would punish them, **assuming that he would simply overlook their sins**. But Christ says, Beware!! Even if God doesn’t punish immediately, you can rest assured, that if you don’t change your ways, he will eventually punish.”

This is how the world thinks of God.

It is often how we are misled into thinking about God’s mercy: that God will overlook sins, ignore them, forget about them.

BUT HE doesn’t. God’s anger is enflamed over sin. He hates sin and he doesn’t allow the sinner to stand in his presence. In the words of psalm 5,

For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;  
evil may not dwell with you.

[5] The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;  
**you hate all evildoers.**

[6] You destroy those who speak lies;  
the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

That’s because at the heart of sin is the rebuke of God. When you sin and then smooth it over as if it doesn’t matter to you, to anyone else, or to God, you are slapping God in the face. God has said in His Word that our sin bothers Him. So we are making light of God’s condemnation of the sin and we are making light of the mercy God extends to us as he calls us to repent of that sin and live in His mercy.

This is how the conversation with God goes: I know that your house is a house of prayer, God. But you also commanded that sacrifices be offered in your temple. The animals for sacrifice must be sold. What does it hurt God if I sell some other things alongside the sacrificial goods? You can’t really be angry with that God? I need more to supply my family’s needs. You would not judge me in anger for such a righteous concern.

### **Another Example?**

And if you are prone to object again that God won’t punish us, his believers, His people, remember that Jesus here is speaking this about his precious people of Israel.

God's hometown.  
A second paradise to God  
Place where he dwelled with his angels  
Where nearly all the patriarchs lived and were buried.  
Where Jesus ministered.

It is the place where the people he led out of slavery in Egypt and into the promised land dwelt.  
If God judges and punishes his beloved Jerusalem in this way, imagine what he will and can do to us Gentiles, to all of his new Jerusalem, his new Israel, Jew and Gentile, the church. We cannot cry out: We have Abraham as our Father. We have Christ as our Lord. We are the children of God.

When we make such claims in order to defend ourselves against God's law we are justifying ourselves. And when we justify ourselves we no longer are God's children by grace, instead claiming WE deserve to be God's children. When that happens Jesus begins to weep over Jerusalem again.

Then our enemies encroach upon us is because God is not resident in His temple. He has left and there is no fortress to defend us!

Tears of lamenting mercy

"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."

And that is what will happen to you!

IF not except for one little phrase: "As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it."

Tears of sorrow and love. Jesus takes on the voice of his fellow prophet Jeremiah as he laments over a people who refuse to return to him.

I have paid attention and listened,  
but they have not spoken rightly;  
no man relents of his evil,  
saying, 'What have I done?'  
Everyone turns to his own course,  
like a horse plunging headlong into battle.  
[7] Even the stork in the heavens  
knows her times,  
and the turtledove, swallow, and crane  
keep the time of their coming,  
but my people know not  
the rules of the Lord.

Jesus cries out: My people do not know the things that make for peace (me). All practice deceit. They do not know how to blush before me. They will fall.

Do you know the will of the Lord? Do you know the things that make for peace? Luke "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. . . . and if someone sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." The will of the Lord is repentance and forgiveness.

Yet, Jesus' lament, his flow of tears for you is a cry for you to know his Father's will. I recently saw the musical Noah's Ark in Branson and the shutting of the door... Jesus' lament is not the shutting of the door. It is the beckoning voice of the Father, calling you to die the old, sinful ways and rise with His Son to new life.

That is because the Father desires mercy, mercy for you! Jesus' tears are the Father's mercy-filled anguish over you. As Jesus suffers on the way to Golgotha and is hung upon a cross these tears of mercy flow. When slapped in the face, Jesus turns the other cheek. When hung on the cross, Jesus says, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus' final words to you are lament and entreaty: "Repent and believe the good news," the news of the Father's mercy bleeding for you. He calls to you: trust in me.

And Hanging on His Word there is peace!

That's because in His Word he weeps over you. Tears and words, words and tears go together whether tears of sorrow or of joy. Just as tears fall from the face and anoint the shoulder of the one upon whom you lean, so words fall from the mouth and anoint those to whom they are spoken. So it is with God's tears and his words. And the words of the God weeping on your shoulder speak into your ears: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Peace comes in the cross and resurrection of Jesus, because it is the mercy and love of God for you. When you are hanging on his Word you are at peace, even with sickness, attack, suffering, death, and judgment swirling around you. His Word IS your peace. Because he lives, you also live and everything is peace.

So keep hanging on His Word as faithful catechumens. Come to His house where his tears of joy and love flow freely. They fill the pool of forgiveness, like rain from the clouds. For the baptismal font is that pool, filled with the watery tears of God's joy-filled forgiveness. Let his tears water you for there is peace in that river.

At his crucifixion Christ Jesus' tears of forgiveness and love for you mingled with his blood that he poured forth to feed the world. In the body broken for your sake and the blood poured out as God's grace, the very heart of God's forgiving love is given to you. Hang on to his words; given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Where Jesus is for you, there is the peace that surpasses all our comprehension. When sin confronts you, and struggles overwhelm you, and death pursues you, hang on to his words.

These are the things that make for peace. Hang on to them.

In doing so you will recognize the time of God's coming to you. You will be ready to meet God your heavenly Father as he appears to you in His Son through His Spirit when you hang on His word. Often, as with the people of Jesus' day, the visitation of God is hidden from our eyes. In the midst of trial, sickness, death, and the various clouds of our lives and human life, we can't see God. Sometimes, in the midst of severe tribulation we don't want to believe God is visiting us. Think of Jacob, who had cheated his brother, Esau, twice. As he prepares to return to meet Esau he is afraid for his life at Esau's hand. But in the midst of his fear God visits him. Jacob hangs on God's word and when he meets Esau, who has mercy on Jacob, he says, "I have seen your face which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me."

Even in the midst of the most severe trial you face, even death itself, God visits you in His Son through his Word, in your baptism, through his body and blood. The things that make for peace are right before your eyes.