

Sermon Trinity 10

August 16, 2020

Luke 19:41-48

Grace, mercy, peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson previously read.

Throughout history you see moments again and again that are often called “watershed moments.” Named after the divides that you see in nature where water flows one way on one side of the divide and a different way on the other side. In US history you could see this with the gunshot in Concord Massachusetts, that moment when the tension building began to spill over and the dam of the American Revolution started to burst open. Or there would be the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Before that, the US was hemming and hawing about what should be done with WWII. After it, there was no question. I was reading online something that was saying that we are experiencing even experiencing a watershed moment right now.

In the Gospel Lesson, we see Jesus describing a watershed moment. I don’t mean the cleansing of the temple, though that certainly is important in His ministry. No, I’m talking about what He says in His sorrow over Jerusalem: **“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. 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.’”** I am assuming you hear what He’s describing. He’s describing not the cleansing of the Temple, per se. No, He’s talking about the coming destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans.

If you aren’t familiar with that, you see what happened was that the Judeans, the Jews living near Jerusalem at that time, often pushed against the rule of the Roman Empire there. They wanted their freedom, they wanted to have autonomy, and the Empire wouldn’t allow it. In some ways, although they had allowed the worship in the Temple to continue relatively freely, they still required oversight of it and pressured against it in many ways with taxes and the like. Things kept building until finally the army was sent in and in 70, the Romans destroyed the Temple altogether. And they did so like Jesus said. There was no stone left upon another. The Romans tore things apart thoroughly—not just in anger, but because there was a lot of gold in the Temple, and they wanted to get it out.

This was a watershed moment. This Temple was the heart of worship for the Jewish People. This was where they offered sacrifices to the Lord. This is where they came to pray—as it says in the reading this is a “house of prayer.” This in fact, the Old Testament said, was where the Lord would meet with them, where He would bless them as their God with them as His people. Since that Temple has been destroyed in 70 A.D. it has not been rebuilt. In fact, on the mount where it once stood, as I’m sure most of you know, there now stands the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim mosque. Before the destruction of the Temple, the Jews worshipped there, now they worship in synagogues. Before it, the water flowed one way, now it flows a different way.

Of course, as we look at Jesus’ words, what does He say about this watershed moment in the destruction of the Temple? Why did it happen? Because they “**did not know the time of their visitation.**” So what does that mean? What is this visitation? This visitation is when God came to them, when God visited them. How so? In the flesh of Christ. You see they went to the Temple because they heard God’s promise to meet them there. In the flesh of Christ, He met them there in a way that no one alive had experienced. In the flesh of Christ, He came to them in the fulfillment of His greatest promise to them. And what was that promise? That promise was peace. In the flesh of Christ, He came revealing, “**the things that make for peace!**” as Jesus put it. But they didn’t see it as such.

You see, the Jews at the time were so consumed in their expectation that the Messiah would come and save them politically, that He would bring to them earthly peace, that they completely overlooked what His real job was: to bring peace with God by the forgiveness of their sins. Look at what Zechariah said when he sang about God’s promises with John the Baptist: “**Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people... And you, child [that is John the Baptist], will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.**” Do you hear that visitation in there? Visitation for what? For redemption, for salvation, for the forgiveness of our sins, because of God’s mercy, bringing us light in the darkness and in the shadow of death. And guiding our feet where? Into the way of peace. This is Jesus, coming to the people, visiting them to bring the peace, not on earth, but peace with God; peace in the forgiveness of their sins. Why? Because that’s the problem. Ruthless rulers, oppression by outside forces, poor leadership from the government, that’s not the problem. Are those problematic?

You bet! Should they exist? No! But what's the real problem? Sin. Sin is the problem. And what's the solution? The forgiveness of that sin in the visitation of Christ.

There's the real watershed moment. Before Christ comes, there's only the hope of this Savior to come. After He comes, the old age of sin, of death, of the tyranny of the devil. All of that is done. All of that is crucified with Him. All of that is buried in His rock hewn tomb, laid to rest on the Sabbath after that Good Friday. All of that is overcome in His resurrection on Easter. There's where the water flows the other way. It now flows in life, in peace, in victory. Even still it doesn't look like it at times. We look around and it looks like it's still flowing the old way. It's like one of those pictures where something looks like it's bigger or smaller than it is. I saw something like that on Facebook this week: two people throwing a ball. The one looked huge the other diminutive. Then they switched places and the person who looked huge shifted to looking diminutive and the small person looked twice as large as the other. It was a matter of perspective. Our perspective now is twisted. These things of God seem to be hidden from us. But this watershed moment is the reality.

In fact, as I say this, I think this a good time to address this issue of how all of this, this visitation, this watershed moment there, and the watershed moment of the destruction of the Temple, how does this apply to us? Well I think we can learn from it. Even though 70 A.D. was almost 2000 years ago, it has something to tell us. It can serve as a warning not to ignore our own watershed moments.

What do I mean? I said that I've heard people say we're experiencing a watershed moment now. Is that it? Well, I think we could apply it to this. Sure. In particular, that comment was made about race relations, and as I've said before, it's good for us to take the opportunity to make sure that we're caring for our neighbors. The Old Testament Lesson makes that point: **"truly execute justice one with another... do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place... do not go after other gods to your own harm... [do not] trust in deceptive words to no avail... [do not] steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known."** That warning was from the Lord with direct attention to the Temple, but it's true no matter where we are. This is good for us to be reminded of this call, and to hear you need to do this. Do it.

I've also heard some people saying that this could be a watershed moment indicating the return of Jesus is coming. They'll look at things like Revelation and Jesus' words and say that it sure sounds like it is. We've got pestilences and earthquakes. Disasters upon disasters. And I say, I won't tell you that it certainly must be, and I'll say

that the Church throughout her history has always thought their time was when Jesus would be coming. But I will say we should follow suit and look as though it could be.

But I'll say all the more, we should look at this in view of our own watershed moment—and pardon the bad pun here, but I mean a literal watershed moment: your baptism. What does your baptism tell you? Think about what Luther says: *“What does such baptizing with water indicate? It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”* It tells you that as Jesus visited to you in those waters with the Word, you should be aware of the peace that He brought to you. That Word speaks to you that you, even you, would know **on this day the things that make for peace!**

In other words, it tells you to learn from the lesson of the Israelites. Look at that lesson. They were crushed in judgment because they rejected the visitation of Christ, the true Temple. Learn not to do that. Examine yourself, repent yourself of all the ways that you don't live according to His words, that you don't bring justice to the world and care for the oppressed. Repent and do those things. Repent of how you look at politics and expect the messiahs to arise there and save you. Repent of how you don't trust that this Jesus will give you the comforts you want in this life, or the care you think you need from the coronavirus, or the wealth you want from your career. Repent of how you worry about comforts, coronaviruses, and careers more than you consider with joy of the visitation of this Lord for you. Repent of not wanting to be with Him when your life ends, but being more concerned with being with loved ones. Repent of not wanting His return because you fear His judgment. Repent of not trusting Him and that He is good and knows what is best for you.

That's the reality that we all face isn't it? We fear this visitation because we fear judgment—rightly so because of our sin. But we don't trust that watershed moment, where He said to you that you are His, that His cross was death for your sin, that your life is in His resurrection. It's not in these earthly things, it's not in all of the things I listed, but in Him. That's what He wants for you Christian and it's good because He is good. He wants you to trust Him. He wants you to rest in that. He wants you to know the things that make for peace. That is, He's telling you look to the moments around and think the He could return at any moment. And He wants you to look at every watershed moment as one pointing you to that hope. That's what it is, the greatest hope of all. It is the hope that will carry you over that watershed moment of His return, when everything will be so totally different than it is now. But it will be different in the ways that are joyous and best for you. That will be the watershed moment, where all water flows from His eternal river of life, giving life to you in Him forever. Amen.