

## Trinity 10

I take as my text today from the 19<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. Luke's Gospel:

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it....*

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable unto Thee, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.*

For a moment, I would like to reflect on last Sunday's homily concerning the Collect.

We talked a bit about *being saved* and the age-old question *are you saved?* I would like to make it clear that we can have assurance of our salvation.

The point I was trying to make, in far too many words, is that the question, *are you saved*, is so freely bantered about that it becomes trite and loses its true meaning for, indeed, we who have accepted God's Grace, have been Baptized, and, importantly, are secure in our Faith and works as a Christian, we may with a certainty be confident of our good standing as the adopted children of God and joint inheritors of his Kingdom. Our salvation is nigh, our Lord is waiting with outstretched arms to receive us.

So much depends on God's Grace which he freely gives and which we must freely accept in order to be saved. It is our assurance that when we pass through the veil, we will find ourselves in the Presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I have written a treatise entitled *What Happens When We Die*. Many of you may have read it but I can make it available for those who like to read it — just let me know.

Now, with that deviation, let us turn to the Gospel passage for today.

What we read from St. Luke is the continuation of his description of Jesus entering into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, ending with Christ's cleansing of the Temple.

Now, in just four verses, 41 through 44, Luke paints a picture of Jesus filled with such deep emotion:

*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,*

*Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

*For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,*

*And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

What a powerful vision of our Lord; what emotion.

This is one of my many favorite passages because, in just a few words, we have what we may call definitive proof of his human nature: yes, he is God, but he also is truly man, and that is one of the Holy Mysteries.

In taking on our nature, Jesus took on our infirmities, as well. He felt all the emotions that we mere mortals feel. And real tears fell from his eyes, proof indeed, of the extent of God's love for us and the length he would go to make us whole again — he, God, would take upon himself our flesh in the Miracle of the Incarnation.

Now, picture that particular moment in time:

Jesus is approaching Jerusalem. He has been greeted by crowds along the way. Now, the path becomes rugged as it descends the Mount of Olives to a point where, in the distance, the whole city of Jerusalem appears quite suddenly, a magnificent sight in that day, and it would have been truly breath-taking.

Here, Jesus pauses. Gazing upon the city in the distance he reflects on its terrible future. With tears streaming from his eyes, he laments, *O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!*

He laments not only because he knows the destruction that is to come but also because he knows why it must come about: *because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

Here was the Messiah they had longed for, only to be rejected. He had been among them, preaching, performing miracles, and they didn't know him. They rejected his presence, despised him, and put him to death.

Had the Jews recognized him as the promised Messiah, the destruction of Jerusalem that was to come within 40 years could have been prevented. That was the tragedy of it all.

Blinded by the minutia of the Law, by the splendor of the Temple, by the gloriousness of riches and wealth, their hearts were hardened. Where was their love of God?

But, alas, collected wickedness as a nation was too great, and all mercy had been exhausted. The time was approaching when Jerusalem must perish; indeed, in the year 70, Jerusalem was laid to waste.

The historian, Josephus, reports that Titus built a wall around the whole circumference of the city, a wall that was nearly 5 miles in length. The wall was completed incredibly in ten days. The professed design of this wall was *to keep* the city *in on every side* in order that he, Titus, might compel the city to surrender by “famine”.

Jesus wept, his tears the tears of God at the sight of the Chosen People rebelling against Him; His, the tears that flow when the heart is breaking.

Those tears have not ceased as our Lord sees the pain and suffering of his people, we today who continue to sin, to rebel against his will.

There is an overwhelming beauty in that emotional outpouring of Jesus as he gazes upon Jerusalem. It is a beauty that transcends all eternity. It is the beauty of divine love expressed through natural passions, so moved as to provide proof of the truth of our Lord’s humanity.

Even today, in witness to that divine love, we see the patience of God; we see his appeal to us to accept his love.

At the same time, we see our fallen nature, that is, our sinful rejection of his love, the result of our own free will.

And we see the consequences of our sin.

As God loves us, so he wants us to love him. His delight is not in our ruin but in our repentance. His desire is our salvation.

As we hear in Matthew 23, verse 37:

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

In tenderness and affection, Christ would take us into his protection, where we would find refuge and refreshment, if only we would turn to him for shelter, for comfort and warmth.

*Come unto Me all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you.*

Jesus opens his arms and reaches out to us in love. But how many souls today have become so engrossed with the cares of the world that they have lost sight of the joy and peace that comes only through God's Grace and through his Love for each of us.

What has happened in this day and age that has caused so many to distance themselves from God, from the love expressed through his Son, Jesus Christ?

Without a doubt, the events of our times are telling — disregard for sanctity of life; indulgence in self-aggrandizement; denial of individual responsibility, whether for one's actions or condition in life; and rejection of even the most basic moral standards.

This cuts across a broad spectrum of our society from the media to politicians and community leaders at all levels.

A pretty rough assessment, not that we human beings aren't a pretty rough lot, indeed.

Regardless of our roughness, we must rise above the world and those who would drag us down into the pit. We must come to the realization that we were created for good, not evil; we must acknowledge the source of all life; we must allow true humility to guide our relationship with our creator and with each other; and we must embrace the Law of Love, that is the Law expressed in the commandment to love God and to *love thy neighbor as thyself*.

The Apostle John, for all that he endured, provides us an example: his most endearing words: *Little children, love one another*.

As our Lord wept at what was and what was to come, seeing the Jewish nation reject the time of their visitation by rejecting the ministry of John the Baptist, by rejecting his own ministry and that of his Apostles, we are reminded that, for each generation, the time of visitation is now.

Even more to the point, we are reminded that the time of our own, personal, visitation is now: the time to accept the salvation offered to us; the time to respond to God's unfathomable Love; the time to be washed and cleansed by his Tears is now; the time to accept God's Grace and act upon it is now.