

***Can there Be Peace on Earth?***

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity

August 13, 2023

Luke 19:41–48

In the first half of the Church Year we focus on the life of Christ, celebrating all the major events in His life. The focus of the second half of the Church Year is the life of the Christian Church. But it's not like we've moved on from the life of Christ. The life of us Christians is actually the life of Christ carried out in us, in our lives, in the Christian Church.

Perhaps that is why as we are about a third of the way through the second half of the Church Year today's Gospel reading tells us things Jesus was doing on Palm Sunday. We're familiar with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday being hailed as king and deliverer. Now that the fanfare is over He continues on into the city. He knows exactly why He is entering Jerusalem. But He is the only one. No one else knows why. No one there really knows. Even those who hailed Him as Savior do not really see, they don't really understand. Jesus was entering in order to go to the cross. But that is not what they were looking for. It wasn't even on their radar.

As Jesus is entering the city He weeps over it. He is overcome with sorrow for all the people. At the end of the week He will be crucified. This is how He will be their king and deliverer. But they don't really understand. No one does. It is only after His crucifixion and His resurrection that people will actually know and understand. And yet Jesus expects them to know the things that make for peace. If only you had known the things that make for peace! How does He expect this of them if they don't really understand why He is entering Jerusalem and that He must suffer on the cross?

Because they have the Scriptures. They have the written Word of God. It tells them everything they need to know. Not only do they have the Scriptures, they now have Him. In His ministry for three years they have heard His testimony that He is the fulfillment of those Scriptures. They knew from the Scriptures the Savior was coming. He has now come but it is hidden from their eyes that it is actually Him. They do not know the things that make for peace.

Instead they want a peace that is now. They desire peace for this life. In their own personal lives they long for peace. In society they want everyone to get along. They want warring nations to come together for the good of all. But they don't really get it. They don't really want true peace. They want their own made up peace in this life. The peace that comes through the cross is abhorrent to them.

Jesus is entering Jerusalem in order to go to the cross and on His way He weeps for them. He predicts something awful. The opposite of peace. He knows the horrific destruction of what is to come. The temple would be torn down. Jerusalem would be decimated. People will flee for their lives. This took place 37 years later, in 70 AD. Jesus did not want this to happen. He is God and therefore He knew it was going to happen. Jesus knew that the people of Jerusalem would continue to reject Him and that they would suffer a horrible destruction.

Ever since Jesus came into this world He has been rejected by people. It happened throughout His ministry. It happened on that day He entered Jerusalem and all the way up to His being nailed to the cross. Jesus says the reason they do not know the things that make for peace is that they have not recognized the time of their visitation.

What does that mean? What is the time? What is the visitation? Luke develops this from the beginning of his Gospel account. He shows how it was in the womb of a young virgin that Scripture was fulfilled. Mary became pregnant not by her fiancée but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her child was conceived sinless and born in order to take upon Himself the sin of the world. When He was born angels announced that there was peace on earth. We know it well as we hear that account of the birth of Jesus every Christmas Eve. We still today take up their words in the liturgy in the Gloria in Excelsis.

This is peace, as Jesus says elsewhere, not as the world gives. The time of their visitation is now. It is Jesus having come into the world; in His ministry throughout Galilee and Judea; in His entering into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. People saw and hailed a Savior. But they didn't really recognize Him. They didn't truly understand the things that make for peace.

People still today don't know the things that make for peace. But we want peace, don't we? We want to be able to sleep at night. Don't we long to know that there is meaning to our life, that this life, this world, this universe, is not just some weird joke? Many people see the whole universe as brought about by chance. That leaves everything to chance, and that frankly is depressing. To think that there is no real meaning to our life here. And even worse, that there is nothing beyond this life.

So many are caught in the lie that we are not meant to be as we are born genetically and biologically. Many do not see that it is sacred that we are male and female, but think that that is just a construct. So many believe that having a father and a mother is imposed by religion. They see Adam and Eve is a fable, that Jesus is not God, that it's preposterous that He was born of a virgin, and against plain reason and science that He rose from the dead.

There is no true peace in any of this. All of this rejects who God has made us to be. He has made us in His own image. We are who we were meant to be! God says in His Word that He formed us in the womb. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. We are not here by chance. This is not all just a sick joke.

We have actual meaning to our lives! And we have life that goes beyond this life! God brought us into life by creating us. We don't have peace because we threw it all away by sinning against Him. But He has restored us to peace with Him. It is through His Son Jesus Christ, the one who was born of the Virgin, who rode into Jerusalem on a Sunday as He made His way alone to the place where He would bring about this true and eternal peace. The wrath of God upon sinners was poured out upon Him, the sinless Son of God, sacrificing Himself in our place.

Can there be peace on earth? Peace as the world gives will not bring about true and lasting peace on earth. But there can be peace on earth. In fact, there is. We know the things that make for peace. We recognize the time of our visitation. Jesus has come to earth, He has brought about salvation, and He will come again to bring us into eternal glory where we will experience peace that has no end. But even now, in His Word, at this very altar, God brings the peace that surpasses all understanding and guards your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.

SDG