



Jesus wept over Jerusalem because He did not want her inhabitants to perish in either body or soul. Jerusalem did not know, did not realize that it is Christ alone who makes peace. So even today, Christ desires that we all know who and what makes peace for us. It remains, now and forever, that Christ alone makes peace.

For Christ still visits His people. He does so through both the Word and the Sacraments, whereby He brings and offers the peace that surpasses all understanding. Faith believes, that through these means, God gives us His peace; faith believes, that through these means, God gives the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. For faith believes, that God actually comes to us in both Word and Sacrament. Here He visits you, His people. Apart from them, we might think we feel peace in our hearts; we might experience relative peace in government and civil life. But that peace is fleeting. And that peace is a mirage. For the only way we have true peace with God is by clinging to the means whereby God gives us peace: Word and Sacrament.

The Gospel reading today serves as a reminder to us of what happens when cities, countries, or individuals reject the Prince of Peace, and abide in unrepentance and unbelief. As Paul writes, “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). Listen to Jesus’ warning. Let us all take heed, lest we fall like Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, the city on a hill, would lay in ruins, not one stone of the temple left to stand upon another (Mt 24:2). May we always learn from the examples of history, lest we repeat its mistakes. And take nothing for granted. In the Old Testament reading the people assumed the temple would always be there. They wrongly took security in their fleeting peace and comfort. Jeremiah warned, “Do not trust these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.’ For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds... then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever” (Jer 7:4, 7).

This has been a tough week for many of us here at Zion. If any of you ever spent even 5 minutes talking to Kim Smales, she would have had you laughing. There are two things Jesus wept over in Scripture: our text today – Jerusalem’s unwillingness to see Her Savior’s visitation, and death – when Jesus’ dear friend Lazarus died. I know a lot of tears have been shed by many of you. Sudden death leaves a hole in everyone’s heart. No one had a chance to say good-bye. In the blink of an eye, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. In the blink of an eye, our dear sister in Christ was gone.

No matter what befalls the Christian, whether its steeples falling, countries collapsing, or beloved saints untimely dying, we do “not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Th 4:13). We have Christ crucified! We have the risen Christ! He has redeemed you, a lost and condemned creature. He has purchased you, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood! Jesus wept when Lazarus died, and yet proving Jesus has power even over death, He raised him from the dead with His mere Word; “He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out” (Jn 11:43). And Lazarus came out.

I don’t go on Facebook much, but I did on Wednesday. By the way, every time I log on, I have about 30 notifications, and 27 of them were usually from Kim Smales. But the one that popped on my feed was a Church sign that read, “THE WORST 2020 CAN THROW AT YOU IS DEATH. AND JESUS CONQUERED DEATH FOR YOU.” I know many of you saw it. You probably saw my comment, too, all capital letters, “YUP.” That was the last thing I ever said to her. But what comfort knowing that she confessed the faith. Kim always posted or said whatever what was on her heart or mind. Kim was never bluffing. She was as real as it gets. And we all loved her for it.

So, though we are sad, we put our hope in the truth that Christ conquered death. Christ is risen, and because Christ is risen, all who believe in Him will not perish, but have eternal life. Those who repent of their sin, and trust in the forgiveness Jesus’ earned, will share in Christ’s victory.

We do not know the hour when evil may befall us. We do not know the hour when Christ will return or call us home to heaven. What transpired this week certainly shows us how true that is. But no matter what we have the sure hope of eternal life with Christ. In this most uncertain year, 2020, we have here the only source of actual certainty and true comfort: Jesus visits us in both Word and Sacrament. And in those means of grace, Jesus makes for peace! In Jesus’ name, Amen.