

✠ ✠ ✠ JESU JUVA ✠ ✠ ✠

## THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Text: St. Luke 19:41-48

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

In the short span of our lives, the world has gone through some pretty incredible changes, even, and maybe especially, in the United States of America. I am not speaking of technology, medicine, or science; I am not speaking of our knowledge of the universe, etc., though certainly, all these things have raced along at a mind-boggling pace. No, I am talking about attitudes and how we Americans look at the world we live in—just how we perceive and identify ourselves. As it has been said, *“Perception is reality.”* The change seemed gradual at first, but in recent years it seems to have accelerated nearly to the speed of light. Increasingly so in these last few months.

You and I were born into a country of hope, a country that prided itself on its achievements, an industrious country with an exceptionally independent, productive, and creative people, a people with a positive outlook on life who looked forward to an even brighter tomorrow. Sadly, this seems no longer true.

If one were to identify a time when all I have described began its steady downward spiral I would have to point to the 1960s—a time in our history of an unpopular war, chaos, and distrust of our leaders, our government, the Church, and other established institutions. Things like the existence of objective truth, rational meaning, and individual identity and responsibility, began to fade away and disappear. Our concept of social relationships and structures such as marriage and family, and even the concept of what it means to be a woman or a man, began to be questioned and even criticized—they were attacked as nothing more than associations formed by questionable moral and religious values—values and morality, it is claimed, seek only to establish one’s power over others.

Even the worth of human life began to lose any special significance. The idea that human beings are nothing more than one more rung on the evolutionary ladder with even less value than animals or plants, began to take a firm hold on the minds of our citizens, making it all the more acceptable to practice population control by murdering human life in the womb and allowing the serious discussion of euthanasia—that is, taking the lives of the old, the physically and mentally handicapped, and now, even newborns and children up to three years of age, all those deemed unproductive and a drain on our

society, in order to make way for the young and healthy and release the rest of us from the financial burden of their care. Is it not ironic that only a generation ago more than 407,000 Americans and untold millions worldwide lost their lives in a war to eradicate such evil from our world?

Today, we have devolved into a kind of tribalism where we pit one group against another fighting “*culture wars*.” Political correctness, wokeness, and our emphasis on cultural and racial diversity have paralyzed and polarized our culture. No longer then are we simply Americans, we are Polish Americans, German Americans, Italian Americans, Hispanic Americans, African Americans, white Americans, Americans of color, transsexuals, homosexuals, non-binaries, and the list goes on and on and on.

In a culture with no common frame of reference, the chaos of Babel has begun to reign. We have now forgotten how to communicate with one another, how to understand and accept our differences, while at the same time celebrating our common heritage as Americans, and more than that, as fellow human beings—human beings with the same wants, needs, and dreams. If we cannot communicate with one another, how will we ever learn to live with and love one another?

In 1962, the Supreme Court of the United States removed prayer from our public schools, and the following year, Bibles, using the so-called “*Wall of Separation*” as their reasoning even though no such clause exists in our constitution or its amendments, and “*We the people*,” sat back and allowed it all to happen. The Book of Proverbs teaches, “*Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*” So, look around yourselves. What do you see? How has removing God from the equation worked out for us? Have we sown the wind, only to now reap the whirlwind?

We have cast out the God of our fathers to follow a god of our own design—a god of self-deception, bigotry, hatred, and hypocrisy. We thump our chests and say, “*Who is a god like our god?*” even as we point to ourselves and place man on God’s throne in the midst of God’s Temple.

Are we too, like Israel of old, to be swallowed up? Are we too, to become a useless vessel in which can be found no pleasure? A land that was once full of hope and light, is, in our age, fast becoming a land overcome by darkness and despair. Hope and optimism seem gone or at the very least have been severely diminished. O LORD, who will deliver us from this body of death?

Indeed, if Washington D.C. were today the Holy City of God, I cannot help but wonder, what would be His reaction to this country God has so blessed?

Our Gospel text may provide an answer as we observe JESUS standing on the outskirts of Jerusalem, the Holy City of David, which *is* in truth, the Holy City of God, for it is there God chose to dwell in the Temple bearing His Holy Name. CHRIST JESUS, who is God incarnate, God in the flesh, came to His Holy City as KING of kings and LORD of lords to lay claim to that which was and is rightfully His.

JESUS came to His own, but His own did not receive Him. JESUS, the second person of the HOLY TRINITY, JESUS the very SON of God, who became flesh in the tabernacle of the Virgin Mary's womb, who gave up the glory of heaven to be born true God *and* true Man—uncreated, infinite, and eternal—was rejected by those whom He came to save. Sanctifying our flesh, He tabernacled among us in human flesh. In poverty, He lived the life of a humble laborer. Still, whatever comforts that life may have provided, even those He laid aside. JESUS, SON of God and SON of man came and lived in the very midst of His creation. He ate with us; He laughed with us; He celebrated life with us, and He wept and mourned with us; He came to save us. In return, He was hated, reviled, and in the end, brutally tortured and murdered upon a cross.

As JESUS wept while overlooking God's ancient Holy City, it was indeed, God Himself who mourned for His people. You see, JESUS came to heal and to save; to reconcile His people to His Father by giving His life in exchange for the life of the world. But the world refused to know Him and His own would not receive Him. Thus, JESUS wept.

JESUS wept because the hardened hearts and stiff necks of those whom He loved rejected Him. He wept because the city of Jerusalem, whose name literally means "*City of Peace*," would have no part of Him, nor the peace He offered. JESUS wept, but He did not weep for Himself. His tears were for a people who would reject "*the things that make for [their] peace*." He wept because they would reject the very "*Prince of Peace*" and in so doing, would also reject their only means of salvation. The people of Jerusalem, especially the religious leaders, could not see that all things having to do with their peace and salvation are made manifest in JESUS CHRIST, and in Him alone. Are we truly any different today?

JESUS, God the FATHER's anointed One, had come to His people. JESUS, the only begotten SON of God, who, being of one substance with the FATHER and thus, truly is God, came to His people, and His Words and miracles declared to all, "*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of [your] salvation*." Yet, the people whom He loved and would die to save rejected Him. Again, I ask, are we truly any different today?

Just as in our own country today, spiritually deaf, Jerusalem could not hear what she refused to hear, and spiritually blind, she could not see what she refused to see. She lived in the comfort of her own self-conceived self-deception. Though she had not cast God from the public square, as we have done in the United States, still, she lived in the reassurance of a misleading religion—a religion of works and hypocrisy—a religion of her own fabrication; a false religion.

Clearly, then, it was not as though the people of Jerusalem were not religious. If their zealousness for self-made works and self-important, self-righteousness is any indication, they were, in fact, very sincere in their worship. The Apostle, St. Paul tells us, *“For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”*

So yes, the Jews of Jerusalem were indeed, zealous for God, but they sought Him based on their own merit and righteousness, as though they were made righteous through *their own* keeping of the Mosaic Law. They said and did all the correct things, but they believed in all the wrong things. Their faith resided in themselves such that they believed in their *own* ability to keep God’s Law.

Therefore, they rejected God and His grace and set themselves up as the authors of their own salvation. Their zeal, therefore, was not for the righteousness of God, and it certainly was not for the righteousness of JESUS whom they refused to seek in faith. Therefore, the very One to whom they sacrificed, the very One to whom the Temple sacrifices pointed, the very One whom they celebrated on the Sabbath, they rejected when He came to be in their very midst.

God, the FATHER had sent His SON and the Jews rejected Him, treated Him spitefully, and killed Him. All their sincerity and all their zeal for the Law of God were meaningless. In rejecting JESUS, they came under God’s judgment and wrath. Jerusalem’s unbelief and lack of faith led to her destruction and utter devastation at the hands of the Romans, and she has not known peace from that time even down to this very day.

You see, Jerusalem tripped over the Stumbling Stone and Rock of Offense, and fell flat on her face. She stumbled over the Cornerstone she rejected: JESUS the CHRIST, and the Gospel of His Cross. She did not believe and was, therefore, put to shame. In the year 70 A.D., just as the Assyrians and Babylonians centuries before them unknowingly acted as emissaries of God’s wrath, now the Romans, in their turn, would bring Jerusalem

to her knees. As the stones of Jerusalem fell around its inhabitants, JESUS, the Cornerstone, fell upon all of Israel and ground her to powder.

So, JESUS wept. In His compassion, JESUS wept in sobs of great emotional pain out of love for His people who were blind to who He is and the peace He had come to give them, a peace that passes beyond all human understanding.

For this reason, this text stands as a warning to every man and woman in every age that one must not trifle with God and His judgment. They are no small things! JESUS has given us a peek into the future—not only the future of unbelieving Jerusalem, but into the future of all unbelievers. You see, what happened to the people of that great and holy city is but a small foretaste of what is in store for the unbelieving world on the Day of Judgment.

Therefore, today's text sounds forth a warning that though our LORD is long-suffering, though He is gracious and slow to anger, though He abounds in mercy and steadfast love, His anger will not be stayed forever. There will be a reckoning and Judgment Day is coming. It has already come for Jerusalem, even as it will come all too soon for all those who refuse to believe in the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST.

Thus, the temple that is your heart must be cleansed. Just as the Temple in Jerusalem was cleansed by JESUS of the thieves and moneychangers, just as they were cast out to make the Temple holy so that Holy JESUS could take up residence in the Holy Place, so, too, you must be made holy and the demon of sin cast away from you as far as the east is from the west, for JESUS wants to make of you His Temple, His holy residence.

Still, this is not something you can accomplish on your own. That was the error of the Jews and as we know, that did not work out so well for them because it just cannot be done. No, we cannot by our own reason or strength do what must be done. So, it is, that we are in danger of becoming like Jerusalem—the bride who left JESUS at the altar of the Cross.

Repent! Now is the accepted time! Now is the day of your salvation! This is the moment when CHRIST is sounded into your ears, coming to you wrapped in the Words of His Gospel. God, in the person of JESUS, God in the flesh, visits you this very day bringing with Him that peace which only He can give.

JESUS loves you. The flesh He assumed is our flesh. He has become one of us except without sin. He comes as a living sacrifice in our place. In this is our peace, and

in this, you can be sure *“that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of JESUS CHRIST.”*

That good work of God in you is not for the purpose of making you better than other people; it is for the purpose of declaring you as good as God’s SON. That good work of God in you is not for the purpose of making you holy enough to get to heaven through your own works and merit, but to make you realize that you are so weak that you cannot reach heaven through your own efforts, but in His arms alone. The good work of God in you is not so that you may have your best life now, but to give to you the life of the world to come.

That good work of God is for the taking of the poison of all our hypocrisy, all our unbelief and hardness of heart, all our lies, and our despising of His Word and Sacraments, then adding to that poison the wrath of God, and having filled a chalice with it, held it to the lips of JESUS—a chalice that He drained to the very last drop for you. Then that good work begun by CHRIST filled another Chalice with His Blood to be held by the LORD to *your* lips that you may be filled with His life as you drink it. You see, JESUS drank from a cup of death so that you may drink from the Cup of everlasting life, forgiveness, and peace. Through this Cup, JESUS visits you, enters into you, and gives you life—real, everlasting, life.

This life, the life of JESUS, is yours because your death was His. His holiness is yours because your sins were His on the Cross. His heaven is yours because your hell was His. He received what you rightfully had coming that you would receive life everlasting and all that is good from your gracious and loving FATHER in heaven.

God now declares you, His Holy Church, a holy and chaste bride, worthy of His Son, not by your own merit or strength, but made clean by grace through faith in the waters of Holy Baptism where you exchanged death for life and are made ready to enjoy the Wedding Feast which will know no end. For the day will soon arrive when JESUS, your Holy Bridegroom, will receive you at His altar in heaven.

JESUS did not come to save a nation; nations and peoples come and go. Instead, He came to save you. Therefore, come this day and receive at His altar a foretaste of the Feast to come. Come today, where heaven bends down to touch the earth and hear your LORD JESUS say, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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