

Trinity X (4 August 2024)

“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.”

+In the Name...

In the especially hot weather, it seems appropriate to consider one's eternal resting place: Jesus never said hell was particularly warm, but of course, that is what we associate with the devil and his lair. The only thing that we really need to consider is that it is eternity without God. Not only that (as if that is not bad enough), but there is no hope that we will ever return to God's favor. Once the final judgment has been made, that is the end of hope, or at least of there being the possibility of it coming to fruition.

Now that should give one cause to weep. Crying is an unusual activity in that it is not always indicative of only one

emotion. Usually when we smile, we are happy; when we frown, we are unhappy. Crying usually indicates sadness in an adult, but physical hurt in a child. Yet there are tears of joy too. I remember vividly the first time seeing those: I was in first grade and my teacher was packing up her classroom because the teachers had voted to go on strike. Right before class was dismissed for the day, the secretary announced over the intercom that an agreement had been reached and there would be no strike. Ms. McGarvey shed tears of joy that day. Stress can also cause weeping. Maybe there was a little bit of that going on in that first-grade classroom too.

This reading is one of only three places in Holy Scripture where Our Lord weeps: he wept at Lazarus' tomb. Most of us know that one because it is famous for being the shortest line in the English Bible: "Jesus wept." In that story we are told how Jesus loved Lazarus, so we can surmise that those were tears of sadness. Another example is when Jesus wept in the Garden of Gethsemane. This episode was before the scourging at the pillar

and the crowning with thorns, so they were not tears indicating physical pain. They could have been due to sadness, but I think that they were due to the stress of it all. Fear maybe – which is really a cause of stress. It may seem odd to attribute human emotion to God, but Christ is fully God and fully man, so He is capable of human emotion. And then the third example is obviously that which we heard read this morning: Christ weeping for Jerusalem.

What is going on here? Surely, they are not tears of joy; of that we can be certain. Ironically, the name “Jerusalem” means “City of Peace”. (Perhaps no more ironic than the capital city of Oregon, that is, the seat of state politics and government, also having that peaceful name!) Jesus was weeping for three reasons: the great privileges that were being abused, the possibilities that were being rejected, and the coming judgment.

1. Jerusalem was home of the temple, the center of religion for the Jewish people. Yet the temple and the priesthood had

become a center of commerce that was pursued at the expense of the faith, hence Jesus turning over the tables and kicking out the money changers at the end of our Gospel lesson this morning.

2. I worked for years in title insurance, and I remember real estate agents using the mantra, “location, location, location”.

Jerusalem was at the physical center of humanity, of the known world. It was also the spiritual center of Judaism. Had the Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah, it would have been the ideal place from which to evangelize the world.

3. Christ knew of the ultimate judgment that was to come to Jerusalem and its people: Jerusalem had abandoned its faith, rejected the Messiah, and as a result would be practically wiped off the map. It was a missed opportunity: Jesus made Himself available to them but their response was to nail Him to a cross. When Jesus looked at the temple, instead of seeing the seat of God’s glory and holiness, he saw the decay of the religious system in which He had been raised. I cannot think of a modern

equivalent: perhaps records I have read of the pagan practices that occurred in Notre Dame Cathedral during the French Revolution. (Lucky for us the French have progressed to have a broader respect for Christianity now!) At first, I thought of all the many churches closing: I have given up trying to count them as I drive around town. But then, maybe I am approaching this from the wrong way: a deconsecrated church being used as a bar, an insurance agency, a repair shop, or a Zen Buddhist center is in many ways less offensive than what goes on in some churches under the guise of modern Christianity!

The temple Jesus would have been looking at was the second temple in Jerusalem. It took 84 years to build, but a fraction of that time to be destroyed when the Jews rebelled against the Roman Empire in 66 AD. The Emperor Titus conquered Jerusalem four years later and made off with many treasures from this temple.

Today Jesus still weeps for those who choose not to follow Him. Our Lord takes no pleasure in punishing His children; anymore than a human parent does in punishing his own children. God did not just conceive us, but created our very souls! Yet ultimately, we make the choice: if we choose to follow other gods, we bring damnation on ourselves. And Our God, being the Christian gentleman that He is, will allow us to make our own choice. May we allow the Holy Ghost to guide us in our choices that we might never cause Our Lord to weep.

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