Tr.10(2023)

**Announcements:**

*"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."*

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 First, as an aside I would like to point out that the final sentence from our Gospel which recounts Jesus casting out the money-changers was not quite an original statement. Jesus was quoting the prophet Isaiah in the 57th chapter who talked about the Great Temple being "a house of prayer", and then Jesus added a contrasting quote from Jeremiah in his 7th chapter about idolatrous people coming to the Temple: "but you have made it a den of thieves".

 We have heard this narrative twice before in this Church year. We heard about Jesus triumphal arrival and his driving out the moneychangers on the First Sunday of Advent. Then we heard about it again during the *Blessing of the Palms* on Palm Sunday.

 Scholars believe that Jesus spent the night before Palm Sunday in Bethany where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived. It was just on the other side of the Mt. of Olives. As pilgrims arrived around the Mt. of Olives and beheld the shining white city crying actually was commonplace.

 Jesus' reaction was no different, although his reasons were. At the spot where Jesus wept today is a church: *Dominus flevit* [flay-vit] (Jesus wept). This is the second recorded instance of Jesus crying, the other being at the tomb of Lazarus. (We have no record of whether as an infant in Bethlehem "no crying he makes", as the carol goes, is correct.)

 Jesus of course knew what was coming: that in less than 40 years Rome would have had enough and utterly devastate Jerusalem. They would draw a plough across the top and rename the place *Aelia Capitolina* [eye-lee-ah, capito-leena] and, for a while, forbid any Jews to live near there. Famine would become so terrible that people who found any grain would eat it quickly in darkness since gangs were everywhere looking for lighted rooms and literally took food out of peoples' mouths.

 Jesus cries over Jerusalem, "if only you had known the reason for your peace". Now the word "peace" in Hebrew is broader in meaning than in English. When we say "peace" we mean an absence of violence. While peace in Hebrew involves that negative it carries a **positive** meaning also. It means: plenty or **bounty**. So, in our Blessing before the Dismissal at the end of each Eucharist, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" is not bestowing just an absence of violence, but also trusting for plenty.

 So, put another way Jesus is telling Jerusalem: if only you knew the reason for your peace and plenty. The reason for Jerusalem's “peace” was that it was God's city; it was the capitol of **His** nation. Jerusalem actually was originally just called "Salem", meaning "peace". Jerusalem was where God told David to make his capitol. It was where his son Solomon built the Temple for the Holy of Holies.

 The Jews of course knew all this. But they did not regard it as a gift. They were ignorant of that **little** detail. They did not regard their Chosen state and Jerusalem's chosen place as a gift but as an inheritance and their right, and so they missed the goodness that was responsible for it.

 Theirs was a willful ignorance, as if they did not want to be reminded of the gift God had bestowed. Afterall, they never had wanted or sought to be unique. Just as Adam and Eve did not want to trust in God taking care of them and thought they knew better, the Jews always had been rebellious. They were rebellious during the Exodus, in the Wilderness, and then in the Promised Land as well.

They finally told the last handpicked by God Judge of their nation, Samuel, to give them a king so they could be **just** like other nations. God told Samuel not to be sad that the people had rejected **Yahweh**, not Samuel.

 So it had continued down the centuries. The Pharisees thought themselves men of God because they kept copious rules, not because they had a loving and charitable heart worthy of men devoted to a loving God. They did not.

 More than anything else the Jews wanted their kingdom back. Yet, if they had accepted Jesus and followed his advice for life, they would have given up forcing the issue of independence with Rome. Their puppet kingdom would have endured and they would have continued to be... a land of peace and of plenty. And, and maybe, if they had turned to Jesus, down the road the Lord might well indeed again have fought their enemies as the Psalm recalls and physically slain the Romans for them. History will never know.

 So Jesus **wept** over Jerusalem not because of sinful activities which went on there such as the money-changers and other wicked things people always are doing. No, he wept because of their **indifference** to His Father's gift.

 So, ignorance of or indifference to their gifts from God, very much spiritual gifts, cost the Jews **everything**, not unlike the Prodigal son who did not recognize how good he had it, and lost everything. The Jews had been chosen by God himself to be God's people in the human world, a holy and thus, separated people. That had been their great spiritual gift.

 Decades later St. Peter would tell the Christian people that they now were a chosen race, a holy nation, God's own people. And, in our Epistle today St. Paul is telling the Christians in Corinth that he did not want them to be ignorant of their spiritual gifts since they are gifts from God almighty.

 He wanted people to be aware of them and appreciate them and **use** them. But, of course, he did not want them used for personal gain, say, having someone work a miraculous cure for money. All such gifts come from God to be used to do the work of Christ's body on earth.

 Beyond ignorance of their gifts I believe it totally safe to say that St. Paul would not have wanted his listeners to be indifferent to their gifts if they knew they had such a talent. He wanted them to know their gifts from God; appreciate that they come from God, and use them for God.

 Indifference to God, and to His gifts, may well be the great evil of our time. Indifference to God spawns evil. While many want to protect the planet, few see it as a gift from God (possibly to avoid then having to recognize our stewardship of it for Him, but certainly not wanting to recognize our **dominion** over it which he gave us).

 Few see the **human** body as a gift, unlike that of say a sea lion or eagle, and thus we have seen an astounding number of abortions, but also of tattoos on young people. (Growing up in the ‘60s and ‘70s around Chicago I only saw them, sometimes, on soldiers’ and sailors’ arms.) Few see **time** as a gift either, until too old to do a lot with it anymore.

 Spiritual gifts get ignored too. How many people born gifted to be teachers, clergy, religious, or counselors go into other fields just to make more money?

 And sometimes such gifts get abused. One can use the gift of empathy or the ability to discern whether others are truthful to get **advantage** over them. A "way with words" which might lead many to wisdom and to God can easily to used to lead folks astray or take advantage of them. We probably all have had the experience of having someone we liked or trusted stab us in the back.

 But indifference to God brings about indifference to religion. "Yea, God is good and Christianity is okay, but I've more important things to do on weekends." Yet losing one's moorings in his faith makes it, shall we say, "difficult" to be virtuous. It is one thing for a non-Christian to do evil, it is quite another for an official Christian to do evil.

 So we might ponder whether Jesus would weep over Las Vegas, Sin City, where so much bad activity occurs. Or might he weep instead over Washington, the capitol of this nation which he has blessed with so much peace? Not just blessed having had no major invasion since 1812 even during the Civil War, but also blessed with the peace of plenty.

 We might ask ourselves whether we as a nation have grown indifferent to God's graces to us and no longer see them as a great gift of good from a great Goodness. Are we using all that we have to bring pleasure to ourselves in this generation, or to help mankind throughout the ages? And, as we inquire about indifference to God's graces upon our nation, we might ponder the troubling reality that three of Jesus apostles (John, Phillip, and Matthew), who saw Jesus weep that first Palm Sunday, lived to see that very “peace of Jerusalem”…**ended**. Amen. +