



ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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Sunday, Trinity X, July 31, 2016

✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son And of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠

“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 are they hid from thine eyes.”

Our Saviour according to St. Luke chapter XIX, breached that hill on this otherwise glorious day, and what is it that he can see, that the others don't, to make him weep? Certainly, Jesus warned Jerusalem, and lamented of her earlier when, “certain of the Pharisee” had come to warn him off of the city and Herod, “Jerusalem, O Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee”. This plaintive tone had been sounded many times before; even before Isaiah prophesied of this child “conceived of a virgin”, who now weeps at Jerusalem's Gates and its “House of Prayer”. Isaiah had warned them of not seeing with their hearts. So what on this day of Triumphant Entry into the Jerusalem, the “Vision of Peace” as it translates, and what in this “city of faith”, can this would-be king see, or for that matter what did any man on that hillside see, and what was not seen?

Was Christ lamenting the upcoming fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple under Titus in 70 A.D.? Certainly he was, as he continues, “For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side and shall lay thee even with the ground...” Christ goes on to lament the fall of their children and, “and not leave in thee one stone upon another.” These are almost verbatim the written accounts of Josephus, the witness and

historian, so it is hard to doubt our Lord felt sadness for that.

But what of the other men and women there that day what did they see, and not see to which Christ refers? There were several forces and groups afoot that day as Christ entered the city in Triumph, and there was a lot going on and a lot to see! Doubtless many had already come out to greet our Lord, his Apostles and followers. Just as doubtlessly the rapture of the event was already lining the paths with palms and garments and filling the air with Hosannas. Add to this the Pharisee, priest, and scribe's vision of events and the city below and all this under Roman subjection and we really have a full spectrum of perspectives.

Those that came out to greet Jesus looked upon him as the triumphant warrior king who would free them of the Roman's oppression, and the Temple and Jerusalem as his veritable palace and throne. They saw a city ready to accept its king, a city devoid only of its rightful head, i.e. a city of faith almost complete.

The Pharisee looking on that day probably had a similar feeling of place: a storied home, full of pride, a Temple full of aged tradition heavy in both weight of law and office but also rich in reward. A place now threatened by the upstart king, Jesus, and his hangers-on, a city of faith now under siege.

To the Roman occupiers, Pilate and his troops, a troublesome but somewhat lucrative city of faith to be watched and profited from, an alien place only to be tolerated for its sustenance.

So as the Son of God weeps, “If thou hadst known, Even thou in this thy day...” we

know it cannot possibly be just for this time and place reported here by Luke on that day. Our Lord weeps for the so-oft missed promise of this city and its people. He weeps for the revelation through time, by prophet and priest of all the mercy and judgment, blessings and curses as Moses says, that have passed before this "Vision of Peace" Jerusalem, its Temple and its people. The moments of hope and dreams half met in this city of faith, leave our Lord with a sore heart. Our Lord realizes that, "even in this thy day" he is not known in this city and so into the Temple he goes.

Within the Temple Jesus' eyes meet those who have always traded within, the suppliers of sacrificial animals to pilgrims. He sees those who perhaps had started out to do good service within the Temple, but who over time had changed and become so commercial, and set in worldly trade as to no longer recognize the sanctity of the place, let alone Messiah. Luke reports that our Saviour went about "casting them out" for making, "My house... of prayer... a den of thieves."

Our Lord spoke of, wept for a city of faith and acted on its Temple that day just as he does today. Our Lord speaks of many cities and many Temples, but they are not the suspects we may call to mind. These locales are not London, or Paris; not New York, Baltimore or even the Jerusalem of today. The city of faith to which our Lord speaks today is ourselves, and our Temples, our very God-given souls.

As soon as we are baptized we are taught to live a more Christ-like life. We are taught and as we grow older, we are hopefully compelled to emulate the words and more importantly the actions of Jesus in all our doings. I believe today in this short passage comes the same exhortation from Christ.

Our Saviour asks us to stand outside our very selves and see what he sees and to evaluate it. Will we recognize him when he comes? Will we be so satisfied with the state of affairs within ourselves, and the way we conduct ourselves, that we like those who so longingly expected him on that occasion at Jerusalem, will entirely miss the salvation at hand?

Will we like the Pharisee, and scribes be so caught up in the rote maneuvers, heady traditions and infinite minutia of every jot and

title of our faith that the gift of life eternal seems almost secondary to our own false sense of achievement in it?

Or will we, "In this thy day" be like the Roman occupation and view Christ an inconvenient visitor at times and hold our cities, and our temples, our souls hostage from him? Will we in fact once again fulfill those other words of the Prophet Isaiah by being "dull people": "their ears heavy, And shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be saved" Our Lord's self same words to his disciples when they questioned His use of parable in Matthew:

"For this peoples heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at anytime they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." The same words uttered again by the Apostle Paul on his entry into Rome. Pray it be not so for us.

As we prepare today to feast on that Most Spiritual Food prepared for us outside the walls of this "Vision of Peace" at that time. Let us resolve to confess our sins before God to begin a thorough cleansing.

Let us further resolve to be more Christ-like, and stand outside ourselves and look clearly into the city of our faith and its temple, our souls. Let us then resolve to go into our very souls, by God's grace, and cast out all that which has become a burden to our worship of Christ. Let us turn over the very tables of our souls and drive out all that would make our Lord feel unwelcome or unknown there. And then let us further resolve to look out to all our brothers and sisters who await him in their own personal Cities of Faith, for it is in this examination of self, the clearing away of the unnecessary, unclean things within our souls, that we may better see "Him who cometh in the name of the Lord" and help others better see as well.

In this cleansing of our temples, we are more fully able our love for our fellow man, and in the Unity of the Spirit we may prepare a Mansion prepared for Himself to dwell in, if not many mansions indeed. **AMEN.**