

Trinity 10, 2017 – Resurrection, Ansonia

+ May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Today's Gospel reading from Luke follows his account of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus has just come down from the Mount of Olives. His disciples and the whole multitude lining the road along the way cheer and shout proclaiming, "*Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.*" They laid down palm branches for Him to travel over as was the custom of the people when welcoming the King. Praise, thanksgiving, and honor.

But as Jesus sees the city, we read, "*...he beheld the city, and wept over it.*" Jesus knew what was to befall the city in less than forty years. He continued, 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.*"

⁴³ *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,*

⁴⁴ *And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*"

Indeed, the Romans destroyed the city in 70AD leaving only three walls standing as a warning to those that would oppose Rome: A great city once stood here, but

for their rebellion and disobedience, they were utterly destroyed. Not a stone was left upon stone, and they killed every man, woman, and child left in the city.

Jesus wept for the city and its inhabitants, not only because he knew what was to come, but because of the great gift they had received and rejected. The gift of salvation, the promise of the Messiah, had been fulfilled and given to them. Jesus the Christ had come to them and they rejected Him and vilified him and crucified him. They crucified him because he didn't meet their expectations – their human expectations.

When Jesus traveled the Via Dolorosa, the way of tears leading to Calvary, we read that the women of Jerusalem followed him, crying and lamenting him. Jesus turned and admonished them saying, *“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.²⁹ For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.’³⁰ Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’”*

The prophets had promised a Messiah that would save man from eternal death and bring them to His Eternal Kingdom. But they had murdered the prophets.

Jesus himself had told them that He had come to destroy death and give them eternal life. But they wanted him to destroy the Romans and bring prosperity to the people.

Jesus offered them the greatest gift possible, but all they could see was what was in front of them. All they cared about was the here and now.

Human nature hasn't changed much in the two thousand interceding years. We are still so focused on what is in front of us that we fail to look at the horizon, to look at what is ahead of us. The world around us is indeed fixated on the material world. Like the ancient Jews, we want God to fix what is here and now and fail to recognize the gift, the greatest gift right in front of us. The gift of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. The problem is our focus.

There is a great cartoon that shows a small boy running and hiding from the rest of the world as they pass by him, unnoticed, because they are too intent looking at their cell phones. It is estimated that the average person in the United States spends over two hours per day on social media. Over the course of a lifetime, that equates to five years and four months looking at social media. That is more time than they will spend on eating and drinking (3 years, 5 months), grooming (1 year, 10 months), socializing (1 year, 3 months), or doing laundry (6 months)! If we consider the total time spent on smartphones, computers, and TV, the number jumps to a whopping 10 hours and 39 minutes per day staring at a screen or over 27 years during the course of a lifetime. No wonder we cannot focus on what is truly important. As a striking contrast, according to a recent survey by the American Bible Society, the majority of adult Americans, 57 percent, read their Bibles 4 times a year or less, while only 26% read their Bible more than twice a week. These numbers are somewhat skewed because the number of young American between the ages of 18 – 28 who never read or have never read the Bible is well over 50%.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they lost their focus and couldn't recognize the "*time of their visitation*". Jesus told the women of Jerusalem to weep for themselves. What would Jesus say to us today? If Jesus returned today in glory, would we be able to wrest ourselves away from our screens long enough to notice?

With our concentration on the world and all the petty jealousies and narcissistic inclinations that overwhelm us today, would we recognize the time of our visitation? Would we be like the ancient Jews and complain that He didn't provide all our worldly wants and desires? Would we vilify, condemn, and crucify Him again? As we lead him away, would He once again tell us to weep for ourselves? Unlike the ancient Romans and Jews, Jesus could no longer plead for us to His Father, "*Forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" We do know; and we choose to do it anyway. We crucify him when we choose the ways of the world before God.

But God gives each of us the chance to turn away from the world, to base our decisions and choices upon reason, knowledge, and the reality of salvation and not upon the emotion and sentiment of the world. He has given us the greatest tools for the preparation of our souls: The Holy Bible and the Eucharist. He has given us the greatest gift, his Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

I would ask each of you to make a commitment to growing in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. I would ask each of you to commit to reading the Daily Offices, Morning and Evening Prayer, every day for the next month. Set aside about 10 minutes in the morning before you start your day, and the same amount of time in the evening. If you don't have a Prayer Book, see me after the service and I will make sure you receive one. There is a table in the front of the Prayer Book that lists the Psalms and scripture readings for every day of the Church Year. Read the lessons and the Psalms appointed for both offices each day. These lessons have been selected and handed down to us from the writing of the very first Book of Common Prayer in 1549 to give us a full understanding of the great gift of God, our duties as Christians, and to help us grow in our faith. The selected Psalms allow us to read the complete Psalter in 7 weeks, or you can read the Psalms from

the Prayer Book in order as divided into Morning and Evening and complete reading the Psalter in 30 days. Don't let your worship end at the door of the Church on Sunday. Read the Daily Offices that you may, like the ancient Collect admonishes us, "*read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest*" the word of God.

You are also called to worship and receive the Eucharist each and every Sunday. It is your bounden duty as a Christian. It is the most precious gift of God given to us, that we may "*eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.*"

Being a Christian takes discipline and commitment. Like any vocation, it requires us to learn and study; to apply ourselves with diligence to make ourselves as knowledgeable as possible to perfect our skills and abilities, and to be the very best that we can. Each of us has taken the time and energy to focus ourselves on those worldly things that make us happy. We have applied ourselves to acquire things that will ultimately pass away. We need to apply that same energy to our spiritual lives and to those things that are eternal.

It is time for us to redirect our focus. It is time for us to raise up our eyes and look to the horizon as we await the return of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It is time to truly be Christians.

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.