**ST PETER’S LUTHERAN CHURCH, WATERFORD, WI**

**TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY – AUGUST 14, 2022**

**LUKE 19:41-48; I COR 12:1-11; JEREMIAH 8:4-12**

**YOU, EVEN YOU, KNOW THE THINGS THAT MAKE FOR YOUR PEACE!**

In the Name of Jesus, Amen. Dear hearers of the Word made flesh;

Mid-term political candidates loudly emphasize possible threats facing you: border security - trillions in government debt - crippling inflation – human-caused climate change - energy scarcity – escalating violent crime - a new Covid strain - Monkey Pox - government over-reaction to health threats - the great evil of Communist China – a power-hungry tyrant named Putin – the integrity of our voting system – and more. Some of these are voiced as the greatest threat you face. Indeed, some of them are real and extremely harmful. But none of them is the greatest threat against you.

As a good citizen – you should continue sorting out political and media corruption and confusion. This is proper and needful. But, do not be misled to think that earthly politics will ever change the deepest threat against you. That threat is the same whoever the earthly rulers are. No political platform – no secular messiah has ever addressed this greatest of all threats.

What ultimately matters for you and for every human being is that which makes God in the flesh weep! *When Jesus drew near and saw the city, he wept over it…*These were not quiet tears as at the grave of Lazarus. The Greek word for weeping here means that Jesus breaks forth in loud, sobbing tears. He openly wails and laments – *If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace!*

The real and deepest threat to mankind – to you personally - is lacking the peace God brings to this troubled and dying world in the Holy One, Jesus Christ. The deepest threat is eternal separation from God. That threat is what Jesus is coming to suffer in our stead as He weeps. It was Palm Sunday. God’s plan of salvation is quickly moving toward completion. The people had just rejoiced with loud “hosannas” announcing Him as Messiah - as we still sing to Him in the Sanctus. The words just before our text were fresh in His ears – *Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest (Luke 19:38).*

And then - *As He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.* Dear Christian, Jesus sees your need as so much deeper than one election or even the existence of this beautiful country. *Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away* (Matt. 24:35).

The spurned peace that Jesus weeps over is profound, enduring peace in heaven between God and man. It is salvation! It is peace that God began to speak when He promised the seed of the woman to bruise our adversary’s head. This profound, enduring peace is what God put upon His people through Aaron’s benediction (Num. 6:26). God’s sacramental bestowal of this profound, enduring peace in heaven was seen in the Peace offerings – central to Old Testament sacrifices. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed the birth of a Son – the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:7) - in whom the increase of peace would have no end. He also proclaimed Him as the one crushed for our iniquities – upon whom was the chastisement that brought us peace (Is. 53:5).

The false prophets in Jeremiah’s day had perverted this profound, enduring peace. *For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying, ‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace.* They refused to tell the people of Jerusalem how sick with sin they were. The Israelites were participating in the abominations of neighboring nations. The idol worship around them had found a home within them. They were comfortable compromising with prevailing cultures. They thought going through the motions of temple worship was enough while they dabbled in Idols of nature and sexual pleasure and even child sacrifice (See Jer. 7). They grew so comfortable with the moral and religious decay around them that *they did not know how to blush.* *They were not at all ashamed.*

The false prophets calmed the people with feel-good words! They did not preach God’s law faithfully as did the weeping prophet. Jeremiah was often in turmoil as he hammered God’s people with repeated warnings that destruction and captivity and death were just up ahead. Yet he also proclaimed that God would turn their mourning into joy, that comfort and salvation would come (chs 30-33), when He restored Israel. The Holy Spirit inspired Jeremiah to proclaim both severe judgment, and also God’s promise to make a new covenant with them - *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more* (31:33-34).

Meanwhile, the false prophets proclaimed a false peace – that required no repentance in Israel – and no wrath against deliberate, continuing, unrepentant sin. As Jeremiah cried out in tearful warning, so it happened! Babylon brutally destroyed the city and the temple in 587 BC. The survivors were led away to decades in captivity. Now, in our text, Jesus weeps over the rebuilt city and the second temple even as Jeremiah had wept (Jer. 13:7; 19:1) six centuries earlier. “*For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

And so, God once again brought destruction on His Holy City. In 70 AD Jerusalem was surrounded and starved and sacked! The lady that had beauty and wealth and religion lost it all. Emperor Nero sent Vespasian who then sent his son Titus. The Romans knew siege warfare. In less than five months, a few hundred thousand Roman legionnaires leveled the city, temple and all. In the constricting grip of siege and starvation, the city’s residents had eaten leather and hay and cannibalized human flesh. The Roman historian, Josephus, writes that a million were killed by fighting or the plague and 97,000 led away as captives.

*As He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in your day, the things that make for your peace…But…you did not know the time of your visitation.* Jesus wept bitterly over people who presumed that they were on God’s side and that all was well with them. They had no lack of information concerning God’s Word, nor lack of confidence in doing their part. That is to say – they were not troubled by their lack of obedience to God’s holy Law and lack of faith in God’s holy Gospel. *Everyone turned to his own course, as the horse rushes into the battle. They were not at all ashamed* (of their sin). *Nor did they know how to blush.*

Fellow-redeemed, do you know how to blush before God? Are you troubled by the sin that clings to you? Did the words of the hymn strike home – “Oh, forgive, forgive my sin! Cleanse me, cleanse me, Lord within in!” The Christian Questions and Answers from the Small Catechism that Pastor Conradt asks you to recite after the Divine Service are very direct in this matter. Although you may be stunned and silenced by the fire of God’s wrath poured out on Jerusalem, you have already answered that you merit the same - (4) that you deserve Gods’ wrath and displeasure, temporal death and eternal damnation. The last answer (20) yet to be recited speaks against the sin of presumption – of being dull to your great need for the forgiveness Jesus gives you in the Sacrament. That answer directs you to touch your flesh and blood body and believe what the Scriptures say of it and to look around at the sin and trouble in the world assaulting you and the lying and murdering devil around you. As Luther said elsewhere the devil is closer than your shirt (WLS 1174).

Do you know how to blush before God just for the lethargy of your prayers? Consider what Jesus did on the other side of His tears at this time. *Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it, saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”*

Are you ever troubled over your own prayers in this house of prayer? Do you ever wish things would move along in order to get on with coffee and dinner and Sunday’s calendar? At times do you go through the motions of worship not hungering for and rejoicing in what the living Christ comes to give you? Do you truly pray for your fellow Christians here (all of them) – for your pastor – for our troubled country and this troubled world – for yourself – your faithfulness – your love for others – your perseverance in suffering? While not a “den of thieves,” does church not easily become a “den of thinking about a hundred other things?”

Dr. Luther said that praying is far more difficult than preaching (WLS 3478). He taught, “Mumbling with the mouth is … considered easy. But to follow the words with earnestness of heart in deep devotion … is a great deed in the eyes of God” (WLS 3476). He added, “For the heart to … step before God with complete confidence and say: ‘Our Father’ – that is a task” (WLS 3477). Do you know how to blush before God just for what your tongue and heart leave undone in prayer? *For no man can control the tongue* (James 3:8). It complains and gossips with ease but struggles to pray with earnestness. Not surprising since what comes out of the mouth proceeds from our hearts that defile us (Matt. 15:17-19).

Thank God, that Jesus and the Holy Spirit continue to pray for you in perfect keeping with God’s good and gracious will (Romans 8:26-34; Heb. 7:25)? *Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not Thyself from my supplication. As for me, I will pray, and cry aloud, and the LORD shall save me.* You see, God is always more willing to hear than you are to pray and always willing to give more than you desire or deserve. This is so because the one perfect man – the one perfect prayer in the flesh – did nonetheless know how to blush. Blushing is caused by increased blood flow in areas of the skin – enlarging the blood vessels. Anger and anxiety and stress and shame can all contribute.

A few days after Jesus’ forceful weeping over Jerusalem, he endured even greater emotional suffering. *Then they came to a place…named Gethsemane…and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed … exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.”* (Mark 14:36).

The cup Jesus named was the foaming cup of God’s wrath against this worlds sin. Since receiving John’s baptism of repentance, Jesus came alongside us dying transgressors, shouldering our burden. Now His once-for-all sacrifice for the sin of the world is at hand. Crushing pressure was upon Him whom God made to be sin so that in Him we might be become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). The weight of the infinite shame of all sin pressed upon Him. In mere hours, He would face bloody, naked shame in crucifixion and the spiritual torment of being forsaken by the Father. The Greek words for His distress and deep grief describe the utter dismay of being struck down. *And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground* (Luke 22:44).

Jesus had no reason for blushing shame in His perfect life of love for us. He had every reason for blushing shame in His perfect obedience to the Father’s gracious will that He becomes sin for us. *And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground.* The only use of this noun “agony” in the New Testament is found, for Jesus’ agony here. His agony embodies the mental and emotional and bodily, and spiritual struggles of all us dying sinners. The sin is infinite! His agony is infinite! The shame is infinite! No minor blush is His, but *great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Beloved of God, His payment is infinite! It is this center-of-human-history gift that has drawn you away from dumb idols to say that Jesus is Lord by the Holy Spirit. By one and the same Spirit, you continue to know the time of your visitation - you know, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace. That’s why Christ gathers you here today and each Lord’s Day.

Risen from the grave, the living Christ visits you with the peace made through the blood of His cross (Col 1:2). Luther described His blood as coloring your baptismal waters – for you were baptized into His death! The risen Christ visits you with peace the world cannot give (John 14:27) – peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7) – including your understanding. The risen and ascended Christ is your peace (Eph. 2:14) – objective, outside of you, in the heart of God toward you, peace, even when your feelings aren’t so peaceful.

This blood-bought, profound, enduring peace is why Dr. Luther rejoiced in the peace (The Pax) during Holy Communion. The liturgy leads the pastor to say or chant it immediately after Jesus’ words of institution. As His true body and His true blood are held up before you, these words fall on your ears – “The peace of the Lord be with you always.” Luther regarded this proclamation of peace as “a public absolution of the sins of the communicants, the true voice of the gospel announcing remission of sins, and therefore the one and most worthy preparation for the Lord’s Table, if faith holds to these words as coming from the mouth of Christ himself.” (“Order of Mass and Communion” (LW 53:28-29).

Luther was not disavowing the importance of personal examination of our sinful nature and our sins as the Christian Question and Answers direct. What he was also teaching you to do at the heart of your preparation is to examine what Christ is present to do for you. Your unworthiness is what you examine within – your weakness – your waywardness. Your worthiness consists of what He-who-is-your-peace comes in forgiving love to give you. In His Name, AMEN

*The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord*. AMEN.