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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
August 9, 2015
11th after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Deuteronomy 32:1-9; Acts 7:54-59

Hymns: 16; 250; 37; 50:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 23:34-39

34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

37 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 38 See! Your house is left to you desolate; 39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' "

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: A Lamentation –

These comments of Jesus in our text are sometimes referred to as a lamentation. Neat word, lamentation. It is an expression of deep sorrow mixed with a great regret over something that has happened. In the Old Testament the Prophet Jeremiah wrote a book entitled “Lamentations.” He was deeply sorrowful over the impending judgment that was to very quickly and very thoroughly come upon his homeland of Judah, and the capital city of Jerusalem where he lived. He knew Jerusalem was to be flattened, and the temple destroyed, and as for the people, most of those who survived would be carried away into captivity. It made Jeremiah deeply sorrowful.

What makes you sad like this? We hear a great deal of sad news on TV. We hear of people dying in natural disasters. We hear of crazed individuals shooting into a crowd at movie theaters, or a school somewhere. We think it’s tragic. We hear of any of a number of ways that people are cruel to other people, enslaving them, or torturing them, embittering the lives of others. Of course we are saddened by such things, but do any of these things impact us to the point that we would lament, truly lament what is going on around us? So much pain, so much suffering, so much loss, it truly is all so sad. But does it go beyond that? Or does it takes something that really strikes home, strikes our family before we would lament?

What makes Jesus sad? For sure there were times when Jesus sympathized with the plight of others. When there was a death in the family of Mary and Martha He shared that sorrow. When Jesus saw others suffer from some bodily affliction He had compassion on them. He didn’t rejoice in the sufferings of others, not even of His enemies. Remember how he healed the ear of the High Priest’s servant? But lamentation? What could bring Jesus to such a depth of sorrow that He would lament? Our text show the greatness of Jesus’ love even as it shows the depth of His sorrow as --

THEME: Jesus Laments Lost Souls.

The event recorded for us in our text took place only a couple of days before Jesus’ sufferings and death. That day His public ministry was coming to an end. Jesus loved the people of His homeland, even as Jesus loves all people. But this was His

homeland. These were the people where He had spent His life, and most of the last three plus years actively preaching and teaching, praying, and healing, all with earnest desire that these people who were the chosen people of God would repent and believe the gospel. On that last day of His public ministry Jesus looked over Jerusalem, and He was so deeply sorrowful that He lamented. So we hear how –

I. He Laments the Rejection of His Messengers.

Matthew 23:34-36 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Even as Jesus looked to the future and how the kingdom of God would be spread, and the message of the gospel sent out into the world, He recalls the past history of this people whom He loves so deeply. Jesus, who knows all things, knows what kind of reception His messengers of the gospel would receive at the hands of the Jews, as well as others. Though He sends many kind and wise men out among them with the message of God's love and forgiveness, they will be abused, beaten and even killed. As it was before so it will continue in this evil world.

Jesus points out how the guilt of this unbelieving world not only continues, but how there is a complicity in all this evil against the messengers of God. The guilt continues and it is shared. Jesus cites the first murder recorded in the Bible; that of Abel who died because of his faithful service to God, to the last murder that was recorded in the Scriptures as arranged in that era. The prophet Zechariah was cut down with the sword right in front of the altar of God in the temple courts. By continuing this string of murderous rejection by killing the apostles and evangelists the leaders of the Jews were to be judged guilty of all!

This wasn't a cry of bitterness that came from Jesus, but great and intense sorrow. Jesus had come into this world to call these people to repentance, to call them to faith in Him as the Messiah their Savior from sin and death. He desired that they would learn of Him, and believe. He grieved in His heart because of their unbelief.

II. He Laments the rejection of His gracious Invitation.

Matthew 23:37 “ ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!’ ”

Jesus knew what this refusal to hear and repent would bring upon these, His own countrymen. Judgment would befall them. Terrible suffering lay before them. Yes, that would include the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans which would involve terrible suffering for so many, many people, but there is something even worse. They would endure terrible suffering that would extend beyond this life into eternity. This didn't bring any perverse satisfaction to Jesus. It tore at His heart, even as it tore at the heart of His heavenly Father. This is the love of God toward sinners and so it always has been and ever will be. God declared through the prophet Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 33:10-11 “Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: ‘Thus you say, “If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?”’ 11 Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’

God didn't and doesn't desire to send any human being to eternal death in hell! He wants “**all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**” (1 Timothy 2:4). This is why Jesus sent out His messengers of peace. This is why Jesus extended a gracious invitation to all saying:

Matthew 11:28-29 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and

learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

This gracious invitation is still there for all who feel the burden of their sin. If you pine away under the condemnation of the law then learn, and you shall find rest for your souls. Our text is focused so much on what makes Jesus sad, but let us also remember what it is that brings Jesus joy. Jesus said, **“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents”** (Luke 15:10). Yes, this is the Lord’s greatest joy that the sinner is saved. There is joy over each and every individual sinner who is rescued from the judgment to come.

What tore at Jesus’ heart was that these people whom He so dearly loved were missing out on their opportunity to learn of Him. They were missing this time when the Lord was present with them.

III. He Laments the Missing of His Gracious Presence.

Matthew 23:38-39 “ “See! Your house is left to you desolate; 39 for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ” ”

There is a time when God extends His grace. There is a time for a people to hear, and repent, and turn away from sin, and follow after the Lord Jesus. There is a time, and it doesn’t continue according to the will of man, or the desire of man. It continues according to the will and grace of God. There is a time for us to hear, a time that comes to an end, and then the opportunity moves on to others, and the opportunity is lost. That is what Jesus saw coming for Jerusalem. That is what brought such intense sorrow to His heart for these people whom He would have gathered together under His care and protection even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. They would not! Soon, so very soon indeed His gracious presence would be removed from them. The general public wouldn’t see Him after resurrection. He would reveal Himself only to believers. The masses of people wouldn’t see Him until that previous Palm Sunday scene would be repeated at His second coming. Then all will see Jesus, and all will hear the rejoicing of the children of God singing His hosannas. However, that will be a tragic day for those who did not believe.

This is an important lesson for us to understand, for Jesus' love and grace are extended **to us** now, and to the people surrounding us **NOW**. It is not about tomorrow. It is about today. We are so good at postponing things until tomorrow. With some things it doesn't matter that much, but for this it matters. It really matters because

2 Corinthians 6:2 "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!"

Jesus reaches out to you, to your family, to your neighbors, to your loved ones, **TODAY!** He calls to us today. He would gather us together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Jesus would gather us to Himself to keep us in His love in His protecting care, in His salvation. Hear Him today, and do not delay! Let it not be that we cause Jesus great lamentation, for nothing makes Jesus sadder than to see the sinner, the sinner for whom, Jesus Himself already died, die in his sin. May it be that by the Spirit's blessing we bring the Lord the joy of the sinner who repents. As we follow Him, may we also deliver His message of grace and life to those around us that they also might be a part of the joy of salvation.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.