

Sermon Notes

Tenth Sunday after Trinity

12 August 2012, Anno Domini



The Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

LET thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants; and, that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. 39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (Matt 23:34-39)

We often believe, wrongfully, that God condemns us for our sins, but He does not. It is our sins, themselves, that condemn us. God watches our foolish ways often with a sorrowful heart – if we ONLY KNEW the harm we are doing to others... to ourselves....and to the loving and pure heart of God – by our mindless sinning! One of the greatest sorrows known to the human heart (a heart that is numb compared to that of God) is that of unrequited love. To love another with a love that is unto death, and then to have that object of our greatest affection treat our expressions of love with disdain and rejection is painful beyond explanation. But there are always many reasons that our love for another could be rightfully unrequited, because we humans are not perfect. There may have been a thoughtless word or gesture we made at some moment of greatest hurt to the other party of which we took no notice, or a thousand other reasons; but God is perfect and blameless of every human flaw. He loves with a perfect love, and He has done all things to deserve our own undivided love. We are NEVER justified in trampling upon the love and sacrifice of God for us.

God, in the beginning of Creation, made a beautiful Garden at Eden and placed man in the most opulent existence imaginable. Knowing that man would be most joyful if he was unmindful of the deathly knowledge of sin, God gave to man, out of a deep love for His crowning creation, one command only. *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* (Gen 2:16-17) God gave this command out of love and not malice for He knew the man would become knowledgeable of sin and subject to the penalty of it if he (man) disobeyed. The weak character of man was such that he could scarcely keep even ONE commandment, much less TEN. He disobeyed, fell from grace, and opened wide the gates of Hell for all of his progeny down until our own day.

It is interesting to note that God did not give the commandment to Eve but to Adam. It is apparent from Eve's discourse at the ill-fated Tree that Adam had been her teacher of all that God had said to him. Adam ate, and Adam died. He brought upon all creation relentless sin and death. God did not cause Adam to die – Adam's disobedience caused Adam to die (and all of us as well)! We are guilty as charged and responsible for our condemnation. Insofar as we are engineers of our own sinfulness, we are, as the poet, Mr. Henley has said in *INVICTUS*, "*the master of our fate, and the captain of our souls.*" If, however, we seek a more worthy Captain, Master, and Bishop of our souls, we need to turn them over to One who cares more for our souls than we can care for them ourselves. That Captain, Master, and Bishop would be the Lord Jesus Christ who died for the sins He did not commit in order to save us from dying from those sins we DID commit.

In the Gospel lesson at hand, Christ has been pronouncing 'woes' on the Scribes and Pharisees. Inherent in His woes are warnings to modern religionists and professional clergymen. One of the woes issued by Christ is of sufficient threat to those lovers of filthy lucre that they have seen to it that verse 14 of this chapter in Matthew has omitted from modern Bible versions based on the corrupted manuscript evidence. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.* (Matt 23:14) What could possibly offend the masters of the fleece in this verse that would prompt them to relegate it to a mere footnote in the NIV, ESV, and other modern versions? Perhaps it might be the STEALING of widow's houses, or the long and elegant prayers designed more for the ears of men than those of God?

Jesus continues His pronouncement of prophecy and condemnation to a people for whom He has come to die in redemption of their sins if only they will believe God. *34 Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.* Christ draws a line of delineation between the Scribes whom He has sent to the Jews and those who claim the title in name only. Those Scribes and Pharisees to whom He is speaking are imposters – written in large relief! Experience has shown that having a seminary degree does not necessarily qualify a man as being sent by God (though properly received can be a tremendous benefit); nor does the absence of such a degree disqualify, necessarily, a man as being called by God (else the Apostles would be imposters – all except Paul) Rather than being emissaries of God, these imposters are those who murder His emissaries and persecute His true Scribes.

35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the

blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Christ is the Word (John 1:1). He is Alpha to Omega in the Greek alphabet – and, so, everything in between those first and last letters. But Christ is also the first and last letter of every other alphabet, including, again, everything in between. We see this demonstrated here in the reference to the first and last prophets mentioned by Christ – Abel to Zacharias (from A to Z in the English alphabet). He is the Word of God dressed in the vocabulary of every nation, tribe, and tongue. The false ministers of that day, who predominated in the chairs of authority, were pronounced guilty of all the righteous blood shed upon the earth. How can this be? These men murdered the prophets of God. Those who do not belong to God do not receive the imputed righteousness rendered to those who are His chosen seed; therefore, only those prophets truly sent by God, and their blood, could be considered righteous. These, the Scribes and Pharisees killed. These were matters of current fact.

Christ prepares to deliver a sorrowful prophecy of events that would soon transpire involving Jerusalem and the Jews. *36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.* Christ will now issue a verdict, decided by their own wickedness, that shall be passed upon them in the very generation standing around Christ; but before pronouncing the sorrowful events to come, Jesus again expresses, in deep groaning's, His profound love and care for the Jews and Jerusalem – a love that is rejected and turned back in hate and malice. *37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* How Christ would have delighted in the people and leaders of Jerusalem flocking to Him and under His loving wings for protection and preservation (there is no other sure means of protection and preservation), but they refused. Not only did they refuse His invitation, but they also killed the messengers sent by God!

As soon as the embers cooled after the Mount Saint Helens volcanic eruption of 1980, the forest rangers went in to assess the damage to the natural environment. All vegetation stood in ashes. One of the rangers saw a mother partridge burned to a crisp. Her wings were spread wide. The ranger, with disappointed pity, kicked the dead bird aside. As he did so, the rangers noticed several healthy baby birds run from under their dead mother's wings. That is only a small illustration of the love God has for us – and the unrequited love Christ had for Jerusalem and her people. He even wept over the city prior to His last entry. Jesus was well aware of the death He would suffer at the hands of the Jews (by His own volition); and He also knew that His Father would certainly bring a deserving judgment against the city, or apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. It saddened the heart of Christ to contemplate this judgment that would come.

38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Not only your Temple, but all of your Holy City! In 70 AD the Roman General Titus developed and encircling land blockade of Jerusalem and erected siege walls and engines against her walls. To reject the salvation of God (Jesus) is tantamount to exposing oneself to all the evils of Hell. All who do so will be left desolate for desolation is all that exists apart from God Almighty. Can you imagine the sorrow in the heart of Christ in saying to those whom He loved dearly, "*your house is left unto you desolate?*"

39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. These men had heard these words pronounced just days earlier; and they shall hear the same once more on the return of Christ in glory.

They will not hear these words the second time as detractors and proud malefactors, but in the kneeling position of contrition and worship – and from their own mouths: *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (Phil 2:9-11) He who comes in the Name of the Lord comes in the Person of the Lord. *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE Lord THY GOD* (Deut 28:58) Reader, do you also go in the Name of the Lord? Yes, you do if you are CALLED Christian and are committed to the title. Are you called Christian?