

Know the Hidden Peace of God
Hidden in the death and resurrection of Jesus -- Revealed in the preaching of the Gospel.
Luke 19:41-48

TEXT: *As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

To this day there remains in Jerusalem a portion of a wall that surrounded the mountain on which the Temple of Jesus' day stood. While it is formally called "The Western Wall," it has also been called "The Wailing Wall" for many centuries. And for centuries, Jews have come to stand before this wall and pray that the glory of Jerusalem might be restored. One traveler to Jerusalem who witnessed these Jews standing before the wall swaying back and forth voicing doleful chants and wails said that it was one of the most heart-rending scenes he had ever seen. (Rupprecht Bible History, vol 2, page 308).

Jesus had warned them that this would happen: *The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you.* Less than 40 years later, in 70 AD, the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem and historical sources tell us of the horrors of that siege, especially the starvation that led some mothers to eat their own children.

Why would God let that happen to the Jews? The answer is right before us: *As (Jesus) approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-but now it is hidden from your eyes.* They had despised and rejected the Peace of God that is ours only through Jesus. Now it was hidden to them.

But not to us! Know the Hidden Peace of God! It is hidden in the death and resurrection of Jesus, and it is revealed in the preaching of the Gospel.

"Had I known then what I know now...." Go ahead and fill in the blank: Had I known then what I know now I would have done things differently. Is there anyone who has never voiced that lament? Maybe you lost an opportunity to make a lot of money. Whenever I'm in Arizona and drive around the areas where we once lived some 30 years ago and see what once was desert now flourishing with four lane roads, shopping malls, and countless subdivisions with beautiful new homes I wish I would have borrowed a couple of thousand dollars to buy an acre of that desert.

I wonder how many Jews in Jerusalem who were caught behind the city walls with the Roman siege outside waiting to destroy them wished that they had taken Jesus seriously when he prophesied this event. "If I had only paid attention to Jesus! But now I am lost!" Jesus spoke the words of our text on Palm Sunday. On Tuesday he warned: *So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel-let the reader understand- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now-and never to be equaled again.* Mt 24 While we can only guess what that ABOMINATION THAT CAUSES DESOLATION sign actually was, we do know that there were Christians who looked for such a sign and history tells us that many of them did indeed flee to the mountains just before the Romans arrived. They were saved. Others may have said, "If I'd known then what I know now!" Jesus was right!

Worse than starvation, being tortured and then destroyed, or even being eaten by your starving parents, is hell. Our Lord in His Word has clearly warned us of hell. More than that, our Lord in his grace and mercy so

loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to redeem us from our sins and eternal death in hell. Paul writes: *God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* 2 Co 5 Hidden in the death and resurrection of Jesus is the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." There would be no peace for them for they would reject Jesus. Today that peace remains hidden in the preaching of the Gospel, and in the water of Baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper.

But who will listen? But who believes? Who will believe our message? Who will elevate the Ministry of the Word, preaching, teaching and the Sacraments to the highest priority in their lives? Fewer and fewer of people still know that God's peace is hidden in the Ministry of the Word.

This doesn't mean that people aren't interested in "church." There are churches everywhere. Which one should we join? How about joining a church that Jesus would join? Now what denomination might that be? Many people believe that it doesn't matter, as long as someone is going to church. That's because our Old Adam is basically work righteous. Therefore it has to please God if someone goes to church.

But what if you were in church when suddenly Jesus appeared shouting that we were desecrating God's house? After Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Bible says: *Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"* Was it the "selling" that made our Lord erupt with righteous violence? Yes. But it the underlying sin was that they had made God's house of prayer *'a den of robbers.'*

What if, instead of a den of robbers, it was a den of liars? False prophets. Pastors and teachers who turn the hearts of the people to their own feelings of faith instead of to the cross on which Jesus died? Those who make sinners feel good about themselves even when they are living sinful lives? Is not the same passion and concern that moved him to weep over the city of Jerusalem and then drive out the moneychangers in the Temple also behind His words: *If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* Jn 8

This is the purpose for this congregation's existence. It is to gather together around the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to baptize our children and to keep them mindful of what that means so that they can also join us in the on-going celebration of the Lord's Supper. For then we will know the Peace of God until God calls us to himself in heaven.

While many were being deceived and misled by the leaders of the Jews to their eternal damnation, the Bible still says: *Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.* May we be numbered among those people who hang on the words of Jesus. May we be a people who turn our Lord's tears over people from whom salvation has passed them by to a people who warms his heart with joy. Amen.