

**St Paul's Lutheran Church (Latimer, IA)**  
**Trinity 10 – August 13, 2023**  
**Luke 19:41-48 – The Day of Visitation**  
**Pastor Peter Wagner**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When Jesus wept over Jerusalem and cleansed the temple, it was all on his great day of visitation, Palm Sunday. A day of extreme emotions. For when Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph on Palm Sunday, humble and riding on a donkey, the crowds rejoiced wildly and praised God for all his mighty works. They shouted, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

But it was a day of extremes, for their king did not share their rejoicing. He grieved. As he rode through the happy throng and came in sight of Jerusalem, he wept bitterly. "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

Our Lord grieved for his beloved city, and for its people. He wept over their rebellion, their perpetual backsliding. He wept because he knew they would reject him. They would cry for his death just a few days later, they would not believe when he rose again. They did not know the day of their visitation. And he also wept because he knew what would happen as a result of Jerusalem's unbelief. Just forty years later, instead of peace, Roman armies surrounded her, tore her down, slaughtered the people, and set fire to the temple. So he wept because today was the day of her visitation, today her Savior was here, and she did not know it. Would that she had known the day of her visitation. Would that she had recognized her king, her God. When he visited his people to save them from their sins, would that she had turned and believed in him.

On the day of extreme emotions, the crowds rejoiced while the Savior wept. But then, suddenly, the crowds stood aghast. For after he entered the city and came to the temple, his silent tears turned to rage. His meekness turned to wrath. He entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers." Could the king of peace really come in violence?

Jesus overturned the tables and drove out the moneychangers, for they were leading the people astray. In their greed, they capitalized on the piety of God's people. They exchanged Roman currency for temple currency at exorbitant rates, so the people could buy sacrificial animals. And the sellers were in league with the priests and leaders, who shared their greed. The leaders had turned God's gracious system of sacrifices – a system pointing ahead to the atoning death of the Savior – into a system of works righteousness. They taught the people to buy God's favor with the blood of bulls and goats, to earn forgiveness by their offerings.

But Jesus cannot tolerate it, for he loves his people. He loves the fallen world he has come to save. He grieves over it. He loves them so much he must defend them. He must drive out the moneychangers and rebuke the false teachers. If God loves his people, he must protect them from their enemies. He must drive out those who lead them astray.

You see that Palm Sunday was the day of extremes. And everyone that day was forced to respond to Jesus in one extreme or the other, either in love or hatred. There could be no middle ground. Either they loved this man, or they turned away in disgust. The chief priests and scribes sought to destroy him, but all the people were hanging on his words.

Joy and praising, weeping and lament, mercy and peace, rage and violence. It's all swirling here, as the cross rushes closer, and only Jesus understands.

Jesus understands because he is God, and none of this is new. This is the same ancient pattern. Of old he brought his beloved people out of Egypt, but they rejected him again and again. And now they will reject him once more. Their leaders have always led them astray, the sellers of lies have always enticed them. Their backsliding always grieves him to the heart. Only a remnant has ever received him by faith, only a few have hung onto his words without letting go.

From of old Jesus sent his prophets to call them to repentance and warn them of disaster. Like Jeremiah, crying out bitterly, "Why has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit; they

refuse to return. I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly; no man relents of his evil, saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turns to his own course, like a horse plunging headlong into battle.

So he rebuked them of old and he rebukes them now. He has great pity on our fallen world. For this world does not know its day of visitation, that its Savior has already come. Around us everyone says, "We are wise." The world says peace is within our grasp, without God. The world says we can attain security and success by mutual respect for each other, by voting for the right candidates, passing the right legislation, by being vigilant for social justice. But their hopes are badly misplaced. They have believed the lie. "The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; behold, they have rejected the word of the Lord, so what wisdom is in them?"

And Christians are just as frail, always enticed by the wisdom of the world. The church is in danger of missing the day of our Savior's visitation. By going with the flow of society, enjoying what the world enjoys, watching and consuming what the world recommends, we are filled with worldly opinions. Opinions that we know how to make peace with God on our own terms. And then the ways of God become foolish, the church seems backward. Then we must change our view of God and say that if God is love, he would be accepting of everyone the way they are without repentance. And if he accepts everyone, we too must affirm everyone however they express themselves. Preserve us from this lie, dear Father in heaven!

Jesus wept and grieved over Jerusalem of old, and he grieves over the church now. He grieves to see us raising children in the church, only for them to quickly fall away as soon as they grow up. He grieves to see the elderly giving up on their prayers, because nothing seems to get better. He grieves when we turn away from him, the only true thing that makes for peace.

Yes, Jesus is the one who makes for peace. The prince of peace came on Palm Sunday to die for the world he loves, to make peace on earth between men and God. He came to save his people from their sins. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But today, you must also respond. You can no longer stand by and watch, detached and half-committed to the teaching of Jesus. On this day of extremes, in this polarized world, with your eternal life at stake, there can be no middle ground. Crucify him, or love him. For he was crucified for you, out of his great love for you.

For you are the church, the new Jerusalem. You are God's chosen people, purchased with his blood. And his day of visitation is now. Today your King comes to you in the name of the Lord. He comes not in wrath, but in love. He comes to drive out all who speak lies that you can make peace with God on your own terms. He comes against all who would make the church a den of robbers. He comes to make this a house of prayer. He comes to call you back to him.

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion," Do not harden your hearts. Know this day of your Savior's visitation.

Today you hear his voice when he enters this temple, this church, his own house, his own body, to preach the truth and drive out all those who sell lies of this world. You hear his voice when he comes to teach here week after week, putting true words in his pastor's mouths. You hear his voice when he preaches repentance. And you hear his voice when he comforts and assures you, that he loves you and gave his life for your eternal peace.

Listen to his voice, hang on to his words, and trust his love and mercy. Trust in him, so that when he comes again on his final day of visitation, you will know him, and he will know you, and he will not come in wrath, but in peace. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.