

A Sermon for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, August 9, 2026
The Epistle, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 - The Gospel, St. Luke 19:41-47
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The events in today's gospel take place on Palm Sunday, just after the crowd recited Psalm 118:26, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Today's gospel picks up the narrative as Jesus began to descend the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem came into view. St. Luke writes, "[Jesus] 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'" (Lk. 19:41-42).

The coming of the Lord to Jerusalem is a repeating biblical theme, with two points of emphasis. The Lord comes to judge and he comes to save. The first great act of judgment occurred at the end of the Old Testament. In the year 586 B.C. the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and the city. The main prophets of this period were Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Lamentations is a lament over the fallen city.

After a time of exile in Babylon, Israel returned to rebuild the city and the temple. However, Israel never regained the glory of God's presence and favor that she knew during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon. The glorious New Testament temple was financed by a less than devout King Herod to curry favor. The Jewish people lived under the heavy hand of the Romans. The nation did not experience the promised covenant blessing.

God promised to come and save his exiled people. As Isaiah 40:1-10 says: "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned . . . the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him."

Jesus came to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to fulfill this promise, but his people rejected him and this led to another judgment. This time it was the Romans who leveled the temple and the city. As Jesus said in the gospel, "They will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

The temple's destruction in the year A.D. 70 marked the end of the Old Covenant age. The New Testament epistle called Hebrews describes how Jesus' act of offering himself to God in life and death fulfilled the Old Covenant rituals and made the temple sacrifices obsolete. The Jerusalem temple was replaced by the Body of Christ. As Ephesians says,

You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

The worship of the new temple is centered in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we welcome Jesus into New Jerusalem with the same Psalm Sunday words: “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Jesus still comes to save and judge, depending on how he is received. Those who receive Jesus with repentance and faith experience salvation. Those who will not repent and believe default to judgment.

But there is a sense in which judgment is also a part of our salvation. To be saved, we must judge what is disordered in our ways of thinking and behavior so that Jesus can save us from our captivity. To be judged in this sense is to be open to what the Holy Spirit reveals to us. This is part of the liturgy. We must “truly and earnestly repent” in order to draw near with faith and receive Jesus.

In the gospel, Jesus lamented that the people he came to save were not open to what the Holy Spirit was saying to them. He wept over the city and said, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace!” He lamented that Jerusalem “did not know the time of your visitation.”

These are things for us to reflect on as we prepare to receive Jesus. Do we know the things that make for our peace? Do we know the time of our visitation? This is the exhortation of Psalm 95 at Morning Prayer, “Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

There is danger to excessive self-reflection and preparation. These can become self-obsessed. We examine every thought and action with a fine tooth comb to identify defects of motive and intentions. This can lead to a black hole of introspection and to despair rather than salvation. Obsessive self-examination is a form of pride that resists the free gift of grace.

Mature Christian self-examination is more fruitfully engaged through the lens of love. Every sin is a failure to love. When we love more we sin less. As St. Paul says in Romans, “Owe no one anything but to love one another, for love is the fulfillment of the law” (13:10). Consequently, we ought to focus on how we have not loved, and how we will love better.

This motive of love connects the gospel with what the epistle says about spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are, essentially, our vocation to love. As the epistle says, “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (1 Cor. 12:7). God gives each of us a measure of the Holy Spirit so that we can share the love we received from Jesus with others.

This is one way Jesus saves us. He saves us from self-centered lives. We were not made to live in isolation. When we serve others with our gifts we participate in Trinitarian love. We discover meaning and purpose. We do our part of the work of building God’s new temple. This is fruit worthy of repentance, and it is a thing that makes for our peace.

Many people struggle to find meaning, purpose, identity, and belonging. They try to find them by looking excessively in the mirror, or by looking obsessively at popular people or images online. We can only discover who we really are and what we are called to do by looking at Jesus and discovering who we are in him. The best way to prepare to receive Jesus is to stop ruminating

and searching and, instead, be still and listen. This begins with worship. As Psalm 46 says, “Be still and know that I am God.”

Our main problem is not usually particular sins: the bad habits and weaknesses we uncover with excessive introspection. These are often merely symptoms of our deeper disorder. Our main problem is distraction. We get caught up in all the things we think we need to do to fix the world and ourselves. Consequently, we fail to receive what Jesus wants to give us, and we fail to embrace our vocation to serve him and others with the new motive of love. As Jesus said to Martha, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed" (Lk. 10:41-11:1). This is an instructive story. Jesus was right there in the room with her. She had the opportunity to serve him with joy. Yet, she chose instead to be anxious and discontented.

As Jesus comes to New Jerusalem today, let us pray for grace to receive the one needed thing; then let us pray for grace to share the one needed thing with others through a faithful use of our gifts. Let us pray for grace to know the time of our visitation and the things that make for our peace.